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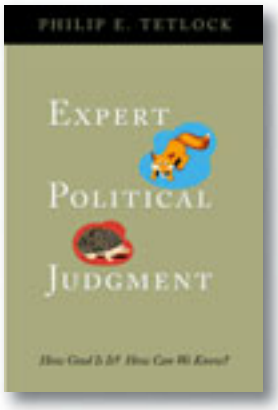

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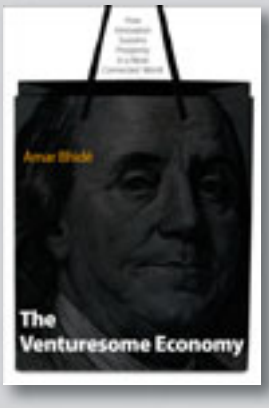

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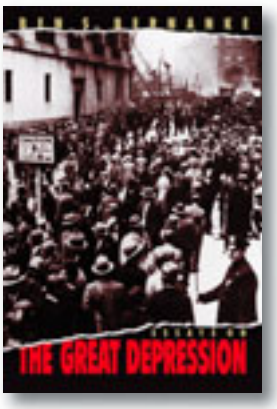

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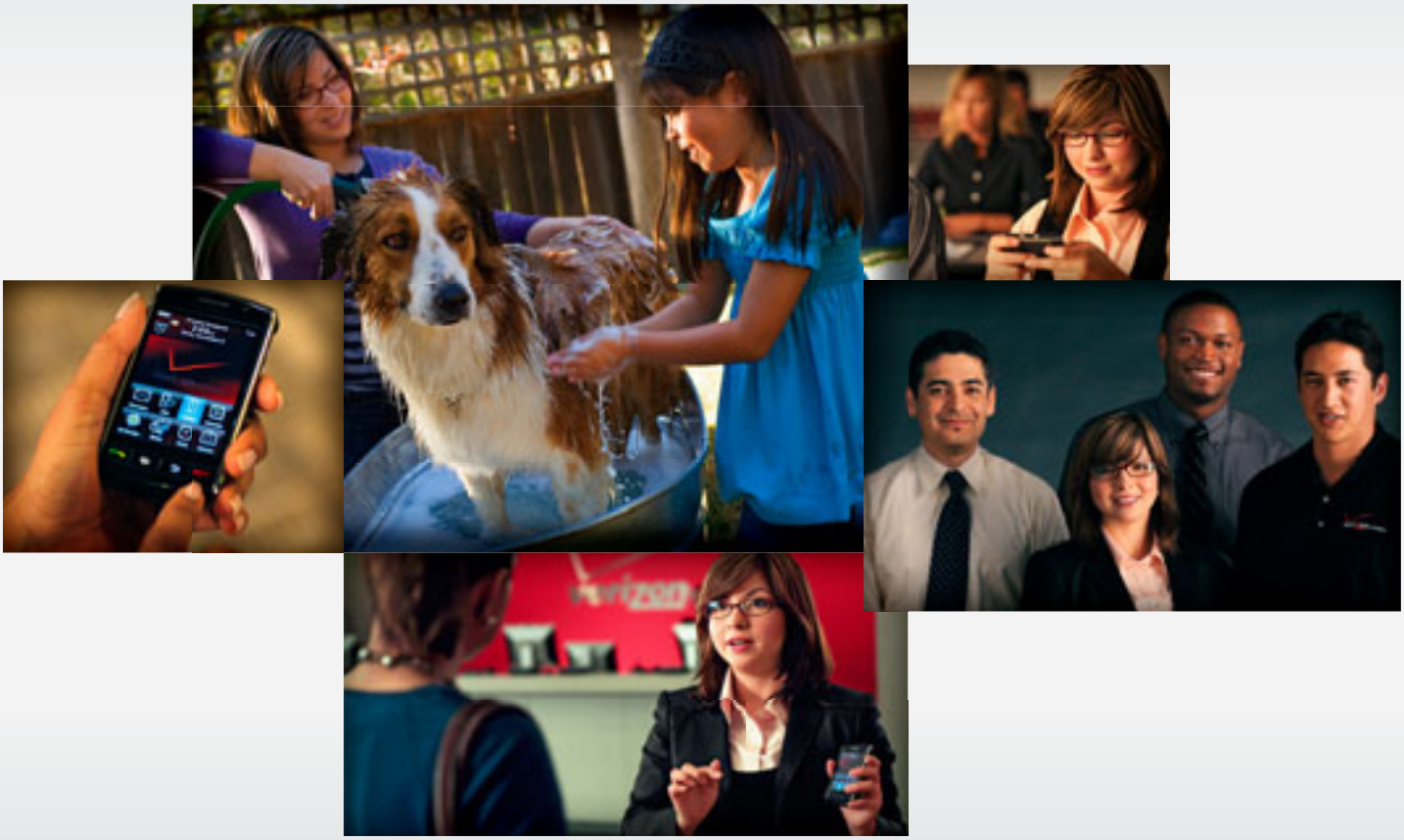

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Book-Banning at the Supreme Court

The Scrapbook has not seen *Hillary: The Movie*, a 90-minute documentary produced during the secretary of state's unsuccessful campaign for the presidency last year. But we have a suspicion that the content is critical of its subject. *Hillary* was produced by David Bossie, the veteran conservative activist, for Citizens United, of which he is president. And neither Bossie nor Citizens United would be counted among Hillary Rodham Clinton's admirers.

But that's just part of the story. The Federal Election Commission has decided that *Hillary: The Movie* is in violation of the McCain-Feingold campaign reform law, which forbids "any broadcast, cable or satellite communications" that refer to any candidate for federal office within a certain number of weeks before an election.

This is usually interpreted to mean brief radio or television spots, produced by corporations, labor unions, or advocacy groups, that are intended to appeal to voters and mention candidates by name. But a federal court ruled that the McCain-Feingold strictures would also apply to movies such as *Hillary*, which Citizens United had sought to broadcast on cable television.

Last week, in arguments before the Supreme Court on *Citizens United* v. *Federal Election Commission*, it fell to Deputy Solicitor General Malcolm Stewart to explain why McCain-Feingold demands the banning of *Hillary: The Movie*. Some of the more left-leaning justices—notably Stephen Breyer and David Souter—had no trouble finding fault with *Hillary*—"It is not a musical comedy," growled Justice Breyer—but then the discussion was pushed along by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Anthony Kennedy, who wondered whether the McCain-Feingold strictures would apply to other media as well.

When asked if the federal government could prevent corporate or union funds from producing a book that mentioned a candidate within the McCain-Feingold time frame, Stewart replied that it could. There was an exception in the law for the press, he said, but he saw no reason why books could not be found in violation of the law, and be banned:

Roberts: If it has one name, one use of the candidate's name, it would be covered, correct?
Stewart: That's correct.
Roberts: It's a 500-page book, and at the end it says, "And so vote for X," the government could ban that?

McCain-Feingold, Stewart responded, is intended to restrict the use of funds for what it calls "electioneering communications," and that would include books.

The Scrapbook would like to think that, at that moment, a very large light bulb suddenly switched on above the heads of the nine justices, and it was revealed to each one that the outrageous restrictions on free speech in McCain-Feingold are an obvious violation of the First Amendment, cornerstone of our liberties.

We shall see. In the meantime, whatever the merits of *Hillary: The Movie*, if it turns out to be the instrument for striking down McCain-Feingold's unconstitutional infringements on speech—or better yet, overturning the whole ill-conceived statute—it deserves an unprecedented Academy Award for public service. ♦

Defamation—While We Still Can

P.J. O'Rourke emails The Scrapbook:

> The U.N. Human Rights Council—with the championing of human rights led by delegates from Belarus, Venezuela and Pakistan—has passed a resolution urging countries around the world to make "defamation of religion" illegal. Given the Obama administration's desire for closer cooperation with the U.N., those laws may be on the books in America by the time you read this. But we will defy Attorney General Eric Holder and the fearsome weapons of the U.N.'s black helicopters enforcing his writ. Herewith a last stand for the defamatory rights of free speech:
>
> How many Episcopalians attend church on Sunday? Fore.
>
> What do you get when you cross a Jehovah's Witness with a Unitarian? Someone who goes door-to-door for no reason.
>
> Hey, Presbyterians, if everything is predestined by God, how come the tornado blew your double-wide to God-knows-where?
>
> What caused the Catholic priest to have a sex change? Altar girls.
>
> Then there was the Baptist congregation that put up a sign, "CH_RCH What's Missing?" And they spent all week trying to figure it out.
>
> Why was the Dalai Lama reincarnated as a compulsive gambler? So he'd get Tibet.
>
> Did you hear about the dyslexic Hindu who had 47,000 dogs?
>
> What do you get if you call a Sikh a

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reckless, insane maniac? A taxi.

And what's the difference between Jews and Muslims? A profit. ♦

The Fall of the *Times*

From Mark Bowden's profile of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., the publisher and chairman of the *New York Times*, in the May *Vanity Fair*:

> Only two years ago the New York Times Company moved into a new skyscraper on Eighth Avenue designed by Renzo Piano. Its façade rises into the clouds like an Olympian column of gray type. Whether owing to hubris or sheer distraction, the erection of a new headquarters often seems to spell trouble for corporations, and many had questioned the wisdom of this investment. The new *Times* building has now been sold, one more measure to relieve the company's mounting debt. Eyeing the handsome grove of birch trees planted in its soaring atrium, one reporter told me, "We used to joke about how many trees died for a story. Now we ask, How many stories died for those trees?" ♦

Homelessness Update

'Mrs. Obama and her staff also visited Miriam's Kitchen, a soup kitchen, where the first lady bumped into Bill Richardson, a 46-year-old homeless man. Mr. Richardson was so stunned that he could barely stammer thank you as Mrs. Obama scooped a helping of mushroom risotto onto his plate this month" (*New York Times*, March 26). The Scrapbook is pleased to learn that the homeless are dining better in the Obama era. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'The Jon Stewart/Jim Cramer confrontation on *The Daily Show* is being widely compared to that between Edward R. Murrow and Joe McCarthy . . . " ("Is Jon Stewart Our Edward Murrow? Maybe . . . ," by Eric Alterman, *The Nation*, April 13). ♦

Life Imitates P.J. (cont.)

Mark Hemingway calls The Scrapbook's attention to an omission in last week's item on the eerie, increasing resemblance of real life to P.J. O'Rourke's satires. Here's P.J. in our February 9 issue:

> The next great government crusade will be against soap.

And here is a March 27 dispatch from the Associated Press:

> SPOKANE, Wash. — The quest for squeaky-clean dishes has turned some law-abiding people in Spokane into dishwater-detergent smugglers. They are bringing Cascade or Electrasol in from out of state because the eco-friendly varieties required under Washington state law don't work as well. ♦

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Casual

Joseph Epstein Has a Cold

In the April 1966 issue of *Esquire*, Gay Talese published a famous article called "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold." All I remember of the article is its moral: which was that, when Frank Sinatra has a cold, the world had better stand by with plenty of Kleenex.

I wish to announce that Joseph Epstein also has a cold, one of those full-court, knock-down, lots of coughing, sneezing, nose-blowing, firing from all portals, let 'er rip colds. In my case only my wife is offering Kleenex. Those sub-Sinatrian characters among us are left, I fear, to suffer without people around us tremblingly worried about our health.

I take even minor illnesses hard, not as hard as Sinatra did I'm sure, but hard enough. I consider a cold an affront, a personal insult. Couldn't the damn virus have found a hardier carcass than mine to settle upon? Without ever suffering any serious prolonged sickness, I nevertheless do not consider myself in robust health. Even as a boy athlete, I was never in shape. "When was the last time you felt really good?" a radio commercial of a few years ago asked. I had no problem answering "1950," when I was 13, or just before I began smoking in my 14th year, quitting a mere 26 years later while on a sun-drenched Swann's cruise to the Greek islands and the Dalmatian coast.

A sure sign of my being sick is that I find myself humming some of the worst popular songs ever written: "Cement Mixer, Putty, Putty," "Linda," and the always freshly banal "Tammy." At times of emotional turmoil, I am able to work through what is bothering me, setting it aside as I tap away on whatever I happen to be writing at the moment. But during a cold of any intensity, my mind clicks off: *The ole hootie owl, hootie-hoo's to the dove, / Tammy, Tammy, Tammy's in love*.

A bad cold is especially hard on the sufferer of shpilkosis, a chronic disease I've long harbored. Shpilkosis comes from the Yiddish word *shpilkes*, which means needles or pins in the pants; the opposite of serenity, the chief symptom of shpilkosis is the inability to sit quietly. The victim of shpilkosis needs to be on the go: checking for mail, taking or making telephone calls, popping out to the grocery store or dry cleaners or over to the library, keeping on the move.

MATT COLLINS

A heavy cold masks but does not subdue shpilkosis. Under the cold, the shpilkotic feels the want of energy but does not lose the desire to keep fiddling, noodling, futzing around. The result is mild depression and low-grade agitation that finds no resolution. Not a good thing.

This cold is now going into its eighth day. During two of these days I had actually, as they used to write of women in Victorian novels, to repair to my bed. On both days I slept the day away, awaking near 5:30 P.M., just in time to hobble into the living room to watch the drearily sincere Brian Williams thanking attractive young women named Trish, Savannah, and Kelly for their inadequate descriptions of the latest depredations on the economy. None of this lifted the spirits, either.

The commercials on the network nightly news shows are directed at the sadly aging. Remedies for restless leg syndrome, osteoporosis, arthritis, stomach gas, and more all get their full dismal play, with their always entertaining list of side-effects joylessly iterated. Under the cloud of this cold, it occurred to me that some genius at Pfizer ought to come up with a pill to increase powers of memory and cognition in the aged, Cognagra it might be called, with an appropriate warning that if one has a reflection that lasts more than four hours one should consult a philosopher.

Now going into the second week with this cold, my appetite is back, the snuffling and coughing are less, but my former flow of restless energy refuses fully to return. Normally a 6 A.M. wake-up man, I have been lolling in bed until 7:30 or 8 A.M. This throws off the rhythm of my days. Some people are on a self-imposed schedule, and I am apparently one of them. I feel that I am falling behind in everything, even though no one is in fact waiting for me. Unlike, say, Frank Sinatra.

"Sinatra with a cold," Gay Talese wrote, "is Picasso without paint, Ferrari without fuel—only worse. . . . A Sinatra with a cold can, in a small way, send vibrations through the entertainment industry and beyond as surely as a president of the United States, suddenly sick, can shake the national economy." Joseph Epstein with a cold, on the other hand, sends no vibrations anywhere and affects no one except himself, turning him into a red-nosed, wheezing, sneezing general nuisance. Pass the Kleenex, please.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

A Budget Deficit

You can learn a lot from a budget. President Obama's $3.6 trillion behemoth isn't just a bunch of numbers and tables. It's a vision of where America ought to be in the future. Obama would ramp up government spending in health care, energy, and education. Taxpayers would foot the bill for a larger, more intrusive government that would claim to improve the quality of life and reduce inequality.

Annual deficits and a growing public debt burden would be secondary to improving society. Obama is betting that, by throwing money at schools and hospitals and environmentally friendly industries, he'll lay the foundation for the next economic boom. The president says he's neither a socialist nor a big-government liberal. He sees himself as the venture-capitalist-in-chief.

The problem with all this is that Obama has an oversized confidence in what government can achieve. The economy and society aren't toys that the president and his whiz-kid policymakers can manipulate to achieve their desired ends. The economy and society are complex organisms that constantly mutate. They repel, adapt to, or coopt outside pressures. They frustrate attempts at rational control.

Why? Because the economy and society are composed of weak, flawed, and irrational creatures with a will of their own. In Obama's view, government can pick up the slack when individuals or markets fail. That's true up to a point. But who will clean up the mess when government fails?

When Obama says his budget heralds "a new era of responsibility," he's not talking about individual responsibility, or the responsibility of families to raise the next generation. Nor does he mean government's responsibility to provide for a decent measure of social and national security, and a legal and regulatory framework that allows civil society and the free market to flourish. No, Obama is talking about the responsibilities government is going to impose on us in the form of higher taxes. The upshot is more government, and still more debt. Not to mention a dependent citizenry.

We wish we could say that Republicans had stepped up to the plate with a compelling, competing vision of America's future. Unfortunately, that hasn't happened yet. As visions go, the alternative budget that the House GOP offered last week is pretty dim. It's the same platform Republicans rode to defeat in 2008: a five-year spending freeze, extending the Bush tax cuts, and reducing the corporate tax rate to 25 percent from 35 percent. It would tie Medicare benefits to income so that high-earners receive less. It would prevent future bailouts and repeal much of the stimulus. And it would increase domestic oil and natural gas production.

There are plenty of good ideas in the House GOP budget. We're particularly fond of the energy program, for example, and think voters would be, too. Nonetheless, the good ideas don't yet add up to an attractive picture of a prosperous and responsible America. The party of Lincoln has a real opportunity to rechristen its relationship with the American middle class, and to chart a way forward for democratic capitalism. That work has just begun, so perhaps it's not fair to expect it to be reflected in this year's Republican budget alternative. But, even judged by limited expectations, this budget's pretty uninspiring.

It almost seems as if the GOP worked backward. Typically, the job of politics is to figure out what kind of society we would like to have, and then figure out a way to pay for it. But the House Republicans started by figuring out how much they were willing to pay—"the post-war average tax level of roughly 18.3 percent of gross domestic product"—and then determined what the government would have to look like to get there. Instead of deficits that bring you more health, energy, and education funding, the House GOP's deficits bring you tax cuts for childless high-earners and corporations.

Conservatives envision a society where prosperous and thrifty two-parent families pay for their health insurance, like their car insurance, directly; where a middle-class family's tax burden is low; where there is money left over to save for education and retirement. If only Republican politicians took up this cause, too. Why not hold off on the corporate tax reform and instead cut taxes for the middle class while drastically expanding the child tax credit? Why not sit on plans for Medicare in order to give able-bodied adults tax incentives to purchase their own insurance on the open market? Why not suggest a gradual increase in the retirement age to secure the long-term future of entitlements? Why not end farm subsidies outright, cap the mortgage-interest deduction, and call for a shift in the tax burden from earned income and labor to consumption?

A tough-minded conservative party is a natural fit for the politics of individual, social, and fiscal responsibility. All it takes is an openness to new thinking, a willingness to break new ground—and the courage to occasionally upset entrenched constituencies.

—Matthew Continetti

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A Nation of Moochers

Happy April 15.

BY **P.J. O'ROURKE**

THOMAS FLUHARTY

As April 15 rolls around let us take a moment to recall why we Americans pay taxes: Because some of our country's good-for-nothing bums are too chicken to rob us at gunpoint. That would be members of Congress and the executive branch. How come we keep electing politicians who will tax the bejeezus out of us? Especially Democrats? At least Republicans are smart enough to lie about it.

We keep electing them because taxes are a pretty good deal. The American government will spend $3.6 trillion this year. There are 306 million of us Americans. We each get $11,765. Sure, we get it mostly in transportation pork projects, agricultural price supports, GM charitable contributions, the Marine Corps, and interest payments on Chinese T-bills when we'd rather get it in cash. But, still, $11,765 isn't bad. Let's say you're a family of five: a dad, a mom and three lovely, high-scoring kids participating in enough community service programs to pad their college applications. You're the kind of family we conservatives endorse. And you're getting $58,825. Even Republicans are on the dole. Dad (conservative women are proud to be stay-at-home moms) will have to make a pile of money to pay $59K in taxes so you can each get $11,765 from the government.

Although it is unclear just how big a pile of money Dad will have to make to ensure that he's feeding, housing, and grooming America for the future rather than sucking her teat.

For one thing there's the possibility that President Obama will make all income greater than the 2009 Madoff investor average return subject to punitive capitation. Also U.S. income taxes are so complex that even Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner can't understand them. Plus we all cheat on our taxes (except for Timothy Geithner who can't understand his). Furthermore, personal income tax, Social Security, and Medicare exactions account for only 75 percent of federal receipts. Corporate taxes provide 13 percent, 6 percent is borrowed, and 6 percent comes from that $9 pack of Marlboros you just bought because April 15 is stressing you out.

Pete Sepp of the National Taxpayers Union did some complicated mathematics and says, "By my reckoning, somewhere between 85 and 95 million households out of 115 million total have a smaller tax liability than the per-capita spending burden." The breadwinners for 18 to 26 percent of our households are shoveling coal in the engine rooms of the ship of state,

P.J. O'Rourke is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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while everybody else is a stowaway, necking with Kate Winslet like Leonardo DiCaprio in *Titanic*.

Pete Sepp goes on to note that those breadwinners doing all the work are also less likely to be on welfare or receiving other government largesse and are more likely to have their Social Security benefits taxed. "If we were to compensate for this," he says, "I imagine that more like 100 million households have a smaller liability than the per-capita spending burden." One hundred out of 115 is 87 percent. Our nation is 87 percent mooch, 87 percent leech, 87 percent "Spare (hope and) change, man?"

It may be even worse than that or—depending on how greedily liberal you are—better. Let's abandon the complicated mathematics of taxation. We don't understand complicated mathematics. We were liberal arts majors. If we understood complicated mathematics we'd be wealthy hedge managers in jail today. Let's go to arithmetic. The U.S. gross domestic product for 2008 has been calculated by the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis as $14.2 trillion. Say the recession keeps recessing and GDP shrinks a bit in 2009. We'll round down to $14 trillion. The federal budget, being $3.6 trillion, is 25.7 percent of the gross domestic product. The government makes off with 25.7 percent of our goods and services. This is our real rate of national taxation. Then the government gives us an $11,765 kickback. If we figure out what $11,765 is 25.7 percent of, we see that before you can call yourself a taxpayer instead of a tax vampire you have to earn $45,778 if you're single, and $228,890 if you're supporting that family of five.

How many households have this kind of income? The president's does, and with only two kids. The president is taxing himself. Good. But all the rest of the U.S. government's operating expenses are being paid by AIG bonus recipients, the ten or a dozen hedge fund managers who aren't in jail yet, a couple of "debt restructuring" scam artists advertising at 3 A.M. on the Food Channel, and Bill Gates.

America's grossly unfair tax system won't lead to class war. Or, if it does, the war will be brief. There are millions upon millions of us Sponge Bobs and relatively few of the sucker fish we're soaking. On the other hand, young people—with no dependents except their Twitter followers—need to earn only double their age to be ladling gravy to Uncle. These are the devotees of the multi-culti who most adore super-diverse Barack, and they're being "bled white," as it were. They could turn on the president if they started thinking about this—or anything else.

The rest of us are in clover. True, we have to "give" 25.7 percent of our work week to the IRS. That's 10 hours, 16 minutes, and 48 seconds. Call it all of Wednesday and most of Thursday morning. But nothing gets done on Monday or Friday. Tuesday we had to go get our kid from school because a peanut was discovered in the food dish of the 5th grade's gerbil and the whole building had to be hypoallergenicized. On Thursday, after an early lunch, we left the computer on in our cubicle, draped our suit jacket over the back of our chair, and went and caught a Nationals game. So we shouldn't worry that out-of-control government spending or an insane tax structure will destroy the American economy—because we have government jobs. ♦

The Master of Misdirection

How Obama maintains his popularity.

BY FRED BARNES

In football, it's called misdirection. When the ball is snapped, offensive linemen pull from the line of scrimmage and head to the right or left. A running back takes off in the same direction. But it's a deception. The play, a run or a pass, actually goes in the other direction. It's a clever tactic—pretending to head one way while going another—that also works in politics.

President Obama is the master of misdirection. His skill in using this tactic is a key to his success as a candidate and to his popularity as president. He is a great salesman, marketing his product—the liberal agenda, plus a few add-ons—in a manner that disguises what he's really up to.

Misdirection isn't the same as exaggeration. Everyone understands that politicians inflate their accomplishments. So their self-puffery is discounted. Misdirection is different. It is meant to deceive.

When Obama intervened last week to prop up General Motors, he said he was merely helping the company get through a rough patch. "Let me be clear," he said. "The United States government has no interest or intention of running GM." Rather, his aim is to give GM "an opportunity" to restructure itself and become "a stronger and more competitive company." Obama made this sound like the corporate equivalent of car repair.

The media have likened Obama to Franklin Roosevelt. But Obama's intervention at GM goes far beyond anything FDR attempted in the New Deal or even dreamed of. Obama fired GM president Richard Wagoner and at least half of the board of directors. He picked the new president. He guaranteed the warranties on GM cars. He dispatched a White House team to Detroit to impose a new business plan and to negotiate

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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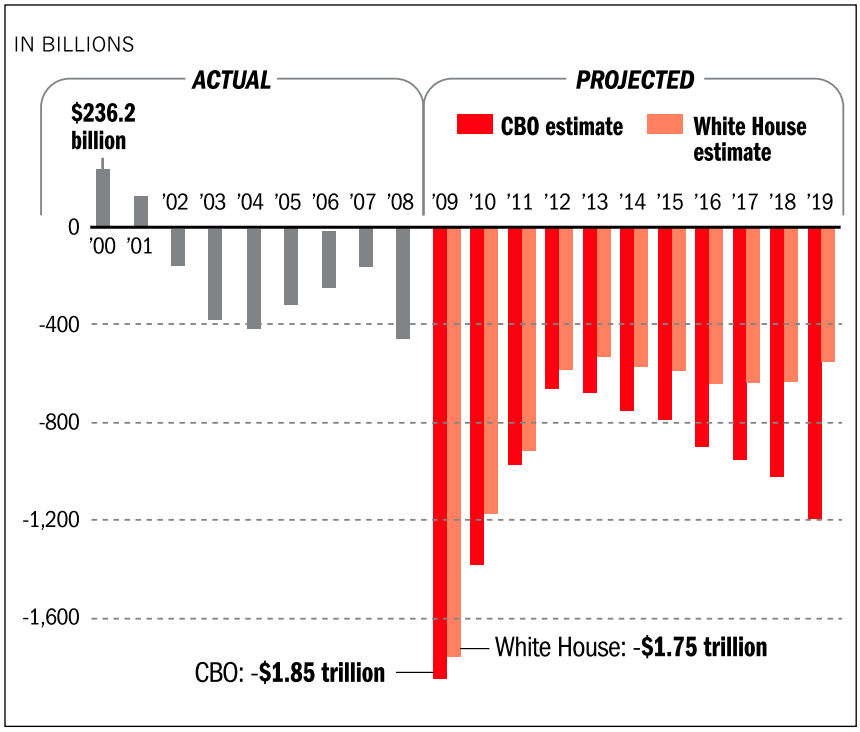

*The Bush and Obama deficits (*Washington Post*, March 21, 2009)*

with bondholders and union chiefs the terms of a managed bankruptcy.

On top of that, Obama advised GM and the other auto companies about the kind of cars they should be producing. Since auto executives remain in their jobs at Obama's pleasure, they aren't free to ignore his advice. Besides, he offered an incentive. He called on Congress to provide a "generous credit" to owners of old cars if they turn in their clunkers and buy "cleaner" cars.

Why wasn't Obama candid about his unprecedented action? He had good reasons. Bailing out auto companies, especially GM, is enormously unpopular. Better to pretend he's only tinkering. By grabbing control of GM, he's able to advance his agenda of slowing the production of trucks and SUVs—without saying so. These are the vehicles people love, but his allies in the environmental movement regard them as evil.

Obama describes himself as a fierce supporter of capitalism. "I strongly believe in a free market system," he said last week in London after the G20 conference. As for the rich, he likes them too. "In America, at least, people don't resent the rich," he said. "They want to be rich. And that's good."

These are recurring themes of the president. If they are lip service, they are frequently invoked lip service. His "stimulus" program was designed to spur economic growth, capitalism's primary goal. He based his request for authority to take over any financial institution on the need to prevent a collapse "that could bring down the financial system." And he wants to "make sure" American businesses offer "good products and good services that they believe they can market to the rest of the world." He's a free market guy.

His policies tell a different story. There are few incentives to economic growth except the dubious one of trillions more in federal spending. He would have the government do more, the private sector less. He's eager to create a government-run health insurance program, open to all Americans, to compete with private insurers. He's bent on reducing what CEOs are paid.

The investor class—those with household incomes above Obama's arbitrary cutoff of $250,000 a year—will take a beating if he has his druthers. Low tax rates and large deductions created to increase investment and charitable donations will vanish. The tax bill of U.S. companies with profits abroad will rise, their ability to compete in the global economy will fall.

Obama's boldest act of misdirection is his characterization of himself as Dr. Deficit Cutter. "We make hard choices to bring our deficit down," he said in his speech to Congress in February. "We do what it takes to bring this deficit down." That wasn't all. Obama promised "to cut the deficit in half by the end of my first term." A month later, his opening statement at a nationally televised, prime time press conference pressed the point again. Yes, he's asking for more domestic spending now, but "at the same time we're still reducing the deficit by a couple of trillion dollars." Other "savings" will follow. "We couldn't reflect all of those adjustments in this budget," he said. (The budget covers 10 years.) Better yet, Obama insisted his budget "leads to broad economic growth by moving from an era of borrow and spend to one where we save and invest."

In truth, Obama plans to borrow and spend far more than ever. As the *Washington Post*'s graph shows, Obama's original budget—even as optimistically scored by the White House—projects deficits larger than Bush's largest for every year as far as the eye can see. Sure, there's a decline from Obama's own astronomical 2009 deficit in time for the 2012 election, but after that the deficits resume their rise.

This didn't trouble congressional Democrats, who overwhelmingly endorsed a $3.5 trillion budget, minimally trimmed from Obama's original, last week. That his spending cuts are mostly illusory didn't bother them either. Nor did the Congressional Budget Office's finding that his budget would accumulate $9 trillion in deficits over the next decade and triple the national debt.

The budget passed both houses of Congress without sparking a significant national protest—an indication that Obama's use of misdirection is working. But there's a lesson from football that may apply to Obama. If a team uses a tactic too often, everyone catches on. And it doesn't work anymore. ♦

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Francisco de Goya's 'Tribunal of the Inquisition'

The New Spanish Inquisition

Judge Garzón launches a crusade.

BY JEREMY RABKIN & MARIO LOYOLA

The Spanish Inquisition was established in the late 15th century to stamp out heretical deviations from Catholicism. By the time it petered out in the early 19th century, the Inquisition had expanded to cover political deviants. It is this latter tradition that Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón—scourge of dictators, Basque terrorists, and democratic politicians everywhere—has made a career of reviving.

Garzón won fame in 1998 when he issued an arrest warrant for the aging Chilean ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet, then still holding office as senator-for-life, and on travel in Britain. The British government refused the extradition, but not before the House of Lords decided to sanction it. People wondered how soon it would be before such a prosecution was turned on American officials. The answer came in the summer of 2003, when the Belgian government was embarrassed to discover that one of its courts might indict General Tommy Franks on crimes against humanity for leading the invasion of Iraq. The squirming Belgians quickly repealed the enabling statute, but the genie was out of the bottle, and a rash of sham proceedings followed in the wonderland of Europe.

Baltasar Garzón

The latest chapter in this fantastical tale began last week when Judge Garzón decided to forward a complaint against former Bush officials to the prosecutor of Spain's national trial court. The prosecutor is said not to care much for Garzón, and given the diplomatic embarrassment for the Spanish government, the case is not likely to proceed much farther—but a dangerous precedent has already been set.

The complaint alleges that the defendants—six former administration officials, all lawyers, including former attorney general Alberto González and former undersecretary of defense Douglas Feith—were instrumental in creating the "legal framework" used to establish the Guantánamo detention facility as well as the allegedly illegal interrogation practices used there. With all the hyperbole and vagueness of a typical Spanish legal document, the complaint strings together a bunch of familiar myths into a conspiracy theory: The Bush administration's lawyers indispensably facilitated its supposed crimes against humanity.

The complaint, nearly 100 pages long, is a sloppy and systematic distortion of the public record. Among its key misstatements is the following: "On February 7, 2002, the President signed a new memorandum in which it is established that no Taliban or Al Qaeda prisoner can be considered a prisoner of war, and therefore, to them would not be applied the guarantees contained in common article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions."

But the White House memorandum's finding as to prisoner-of-war status was based on the fact that both the Taliban and al Qaeda flagrantly ignore the laws of war, and the Supreme Court has turned down every opportunity to disagree. But in any case the memorandum's finding as to Article 3 had nothing to do with this: By its terms Article 3 applies only to conflicts "not of an international character," which the White House reasonably interpreted as a reference to things like civil war.

The complaint further accuses Douglas Feith of authoring the "juridical analysis" used as a basis for denying *all* detainees *all* the protections of the Geneva Conventions. This propagates one of the many false claims advanced by Philippe Sands in his book *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values* (2008). These claims have been debunked as fraudulent on the basis of the very documents and interview transcripts that Sands used in his "research." It is a particularly sad charge, because—as the Garzón complaint itself acknowledges elsewhere—Feith in fact had argued *in favor* of applying the Geneva Conventions to

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the Taliban generally, a recommendation that Bush accepted.

The complaint, then, is a naked attempt to criminalize the legal advice given within the Bush administration, but the complaint's drafters can't even manage to explain what that advice was without one mistake after another. No matter. That advice is held to be the source of "all errors and crimes," as the bishop of Almería said of the Freemasons in 1815.

There is a comical aspect to Garzón's conceit. The phenomenon of European courts crusading to enforce international norms arose partly to fill the vacuum created in countries where legal systems had been gutted by war, dictatorship, or corruption. It should be enough to point out that the American legal system functions adequately—but to put things in full perspective, it functions much better than the Spanish one. The Spanish system carries long-term case backlogs that would be a political embarrassment in the United States. American legal education is also vastly better than Spain's. And as for rigorous legal reasoning—let's just say that the Inquisition is not what it used to be.

This case portends a ticklish problem for America's Democrats. During the 2008 campaign, Barack Obama abetted the impression that torture and other crimes had been committed during the Bush years. But if he thinks that waterboarding is torture, why isn't he launching prosecutions now? Because he wants to look forward and not backward? Is that a sufficient justification for casting aside his constitutional duty to see that the laws are faithfully executed? Is it a sufficient basis for casting aside international norms where crimes against humanity have been committed? Spanish courts are not likely to think so—and their interpretation of "aiding and abetting" is very expansive.

If Spain's recent moves against Bush officials are problematic for Obama, Spain's current proceedings against Israeli officials are even more so. In January of this year, another Spanish judge, Fernando Abreu, accepted a complaint alleging crimes against humanity for the targeted assassination by Israel of a Hamas terrorist leader in his home in Gaza in 2002—an attack in which 14 other Gazans were killed. The implicated Israeli officials have been warned not to travel to Europe.

The problem for Obama is that the United States under his administration has been conducting identical attacks against terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan with no more concern for collateral casualties. Now he has to worry that his own advisers and officials might be unpleasantly surprised by sudden arrest warrants when they travel to Europe.

Democrats have in recent years grown fond of using the legal arguments of foreigners, even foreign enemies, to increase their leverage against domestic political opponents. The Democrats' reflexive use of international law for short-term political gain is resulting in a steady erosion of America's acknowledged sovereign rights. And if Obama does not put his foot down on this new foreign intrusion into our system, a new front in the conflict with terrorists will open—in antagonistic courtroom proceedings around the world. Alas, Obama has decided to appoint as the State Department's new legal adviser Yale law school dean Harold Koh, who champions transnational law-enforcement because, as he puts it, "sovereignty has declined in importance." But that's tantamount to saying that democracy has declined in importance: Only sovereign nations can be self-governing.

In the end what the Garzón case highlights is the need for bipartisan vindication of U.S. sovereignty. The Spanish courts are not trying to punish Bush officials for personal or even partisan misconduct. They are seeking to punish official U.S. government conduct in the course of public duties carried out within the world's most legalistic and transparent system. Worst of all, those officials are being targeted not for decisions they made themselves, but only for what they are alleged to have *believed* at the time. If Spanish courts start treating heresy as an international crime, Republican officials won't be the only ones facing indictment. ♦

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In Praise of a GOP Moderate

Mark Kirk is the party's best hope in Illinois.

BY KENNETH TOMLINSON

In early summer of 2005, I was preparing to go to Afghanistan to examine the state of U.S. international broadcasting there when a friend suggested I call on Illinois representative Mark Kirk.

I really didn't expect to learn much from a congressman, but Kirk was on the House Appropriations Committee and, throughout my years of involvement in international broadcasting, I have never rejected a chance for contact with appropriators.

Kirk, though, proved a surprise. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of Afghanistan and of broadcasting there. "You are covering Kabul well—but you are not reaching the rugged, mountainous border with Pakistan [where Osama Bin Laden is believed to be in hiding].

> You are broadcasting there in shortwave—but that's no longer the primary medium of the region. I was up [in the Northwest Frontier Province] late last year, and I got out of my vehicle and went from car to car, truck to truck. Everyone was listening to a radio—AM or FM radio.

Both Kirk and I knew how difficult it is to change the traditions of a federal agency, but out of our discussion that day came plans to place an AM facility near the eastern Afghanistan city of Khost and line-of-sight FM transmitters on mountain peaks that could reach people throughout the region. Separate news and programming would be focused on the interests of the Pashtuns who dominate the region.

In Afghanistan, both Afghan and American senior officials were enthusiastic about the plan. President Hamid Karzai sent word that it was the highest broadcasting priority for his country. Back in Washington, I sought administration support for the plan, but OMB is not the place to go if you are looking for innovative ways to fight the war on terror. The best I could do was the hope of inclusion in the 2007 budget—which meant funding was at best more than two years away.

Mark Kirk

I told Kirk that we had won the battle, but were losing the war. "They're marking up the '05 budget on the House floor this afternoon," he said. "Come with me to talk with the subcommittee chairman."

Soon we were in the office of Frank Wolf, and Kirk was making the case for a different kind of broadcasting along the Afghan-Pakistan border. That afternoon $2.1 million was inserted in the appropriations bill, and within a month our agency had the money to begin planning.

I had been around Congress for decades, and I had rarely seen anything like Kirk's ability to get things done.

Trim and alert in appearance, Mark Kirk looks every inch the Naval Reserve officer he is. (He has served in Turkey, Serbia, and Bosnia, and flew missions during the Gulf war.)

A graduate of Cornell and the London School of Economics, he was chief of staff in the office of moderate Illinois representative John Porter in the 1980s, and it was with Porter's backing that in 2000 he won an 11-person primary to succeed him.

The 10th district is one of the most socially liberal areas in America, and Kirk is a moderate on issues like abortion, the environment, and homosexual rights. But the state has trended heavily Democratic in recent years, and Kirk was targeted by a well-funded Democratic opponent in 2008. With Barack Obama running a full 20 percentage points ahead of the Republican ticket in the district—and the Obama campaign headquarters little more than a mile away—prognosticators in Washington had Mark Kirk marked for extinction.

But the mild-mannered Kirk was not going to go down easy. He is fluent in Spanish and worked hard to get Hispanic votes—the district is 15 percent Hispanic. He ran boldly on his strong record of fiscal conservatism calling for sharp cuts in the capital-gains tax and federal spending cuts and the elimination of congressional earmarking (except, of course, when that is the only way to find money to fight the war on terror in Afghanistan). Kirk not only won reelection in a district Obama carried by 23 points, he also slightly increased his margin of victory from 2006.

Less than a month after his victory, Naval Reserve Commander Mark Kirk was in Afghanistan work-

Kenneth Tomlinson, former editor in chief of Reader's Digest, *was chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees U.S. international broadcasting, from 2002-2007.*

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ing counternarcotics around Kandahar. (He concluded that our four-year failure to control opium cultivation was responsible for the Taliban resurgence in southern Afghanistan.) He spent most of December there—the first time a U.S. representative has deployed to an imminent danger area since World War II.

In January, he was fighting a different battle, serving as one of the most articulate (and outspoken) opponents of the Obama stimulus bill:

> Combined with the provisions of the Ways and Means Committee, this legislation will cost taxpayers $825 billion and claims to save 3.7 million jobs. That means the government will save each job at an average cost of $222,972. Combined with the previous $700 billion bailout bill, the cost per job saved by recent congressional spending is $412,162 per job saved. On average, the private sector created jobs at a cost of $50,283 per job in 2007.

No Republican was more forceful in going after scandalous earmarks—and earmarkers. Kirk cast aside congressional decorum and condemned the obvious chicanery of the more than 9,000 earmarks in the omnibus 2009 appropriations bill. In a memo to GOP colleagues, Kirk charged:

> This bill includes at least 23 earmarks for PMA Company lobbyists. The FBI raided PMA's offices in Arlington in November. The Justice Department is currently investigating whether PMA lobbyists used "straw donors" to route money to favored lawmakers.

He listed by name the millions in earmarks to PMA clients. Kirk also identified in his memo the recipients of Democratic representative John Murtha's earmarks—unions and businessmen who had given him lavish political contributions. Kirk may be a moderate, but he's not a wimp.

Kirk is the reason that Illinois Democrats have not fulfilled their pledge to hold a special election to fill President Obama's Senate seat, now held by the Blagojevich-appointed Roland Burris. Backing away from earlier assurances that Obama's successor would be elected, Illinois Democrats defeated a legislative move to enable the people to elect their U.S. senator. But with Burris under federal investigation for lying his way (under oath) into the Senate and Blagojevich newly indicted (a move that will unleash another flood of taped conversations), Illinois political observers believe a special election is inevitable. Republicans see an opportunity.

Kirk is not the only potential Republican candidate. He may face opposition from second-term Representative Peter Roskam, a popular Republican with a near-perfect conservative voting record. Yet, unlike many House Republican moderates, Kirk is genuinely liked and respected throughout the party. There already is talk of Roskam soon winning a spot in the House Republican leadership, and he might be convinced his real future is in the House.

After Kirk's surprisingly impressive reelection victory last year, the *Rothenberg Political Report* declared: "It appears that no amount of Democratic money will take Kirk down." Rothenberg was writing about Kirk's North Shore congressional district. Soon he might be saying that about the state of Illinois. ♦

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Supporters of Nawaz Sharif at an anti-government rally in Multan, Pakistan, March 14

ASSOCIATED PRESS / KHALID TANVEER

American Interests in Pakistan

Zardari serves them better than Sharif.

BY DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

Recent turmoil in Pakistan has altered the political landscape in ways that should register with policymakers in Washington. Events have cast something of a pall over the government of President Asif Ali Zardari, a champion of the fight against Islamic militants, while elevating populist opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, a two-time former prime minister now returned from exile in Saudi Arabia. Sharif has adopted an increasingly conspiratorial and anti-American tone. The leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), he may be preparing for a return to power—which could create trouble for U.S. strategic interests.

When Zardari, widower of the assassinated Benazir Bhutto, succeeded General Pervez Musharraf as president in September 2008, some looked to a new era of stability. The convulsions of the past month have undercut those hopes. On February 25, Pakistan's supreme court disqualified Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz, chief minister of Punjab province, from public office. While Nawaz had a long history of corruption, Joshua T. White, a research fellow at the Institute for Global Engagement, believes the dismissal of Shahbaz Sharif was foolish, in that Shahbaz "was seen as legitimate, popular, and relatively clean of controversy."

Nawaz Sharif responded by urging the people of Pakistan to rise up. Thousands took to the streets, torching cars and images of President Zardari. Protests were held in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, and numerous districts in Punjab. Nawaz Sharif managed the situation skillfully, positioning himself as an adherent of democracy and the rule of law even as he instigated violent protests. The ruling barring the Sharif brothers from public office became linked to a second political issue, the reinstatement of Iftikhar Chaudhry as chief justice.

The pro-Sharif demonstrators rallied to the cause of Chaudhry's reinstatement. Sharif began to lead a "long march" from Lahore to Islamabad, accompanied by a throng of lawyers. This coincided with other signs of instability, including tensions within Zardari's Pakistan Peoples Party that led to the resignation of his information minister (in protest over a media clampdown) and a senior federal minister.

Zardari caved, restoring Chaudhry as chief justice on March 16. He also agreed to permit an appeal of the Sharif brothers' disqualification from office. Chaudhry promptly reinstated Shahbaz Sharif as chief minister of Punjab.

At the height of these events the security forces briefly balked at following civilian orders, "a classic precursor indicator to the collapse of the Pakistani government," counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen told the *Wall Street Journal*. Since then, Pakistan has stepped back from the brink, Zardari's concessions having defused some of the anger directed at his government. But doubts remain about the government's long-term stability.

The clear winner from the chaos, Nawaz Sharif has "shrewdly aligned himself with Pakistani public opinion," White told me, "and positioned himself to be the next prime minister down the road." By the time that happens, political power may have shifted back from the presidency to the prime ministership, reversing a Musharraf-era reform.

All of this should cause concern in Washington. Sharif has been harshly

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critical of the U.S. role in Pakistan, and his party, according to commentator Ali Malik in the English-language Pakistani daily *The News*, "probably represents the single biggest segment of the Pakistani polity that is still not convinced about the urgency of the threat of religious extremism and terrorism"; indeed, the writer accuses the PML-N of having "a soft corner for the extremist elements." Sharif's illiberal attitudes, moreover, are nothing new. In a 1990 run for prime minister, he railed against Benazir Bhutto as part of an American-led "Indo-Zionist lobby."

Where would a Sharif government stand on U.S. Predator strikes carried out on Pakistani soil? The present government has been distinctly more accommodating than its predecessor. In 2007, Musharraf's last full year as president, the United States located over 20 terrorist targets in Pakistan and requested permission to strike about 15, but Pakistan's leadership approved only 3 strikes. In contrast, Zardari has authorized over 30 hits in his seven months as president, allowing the United States to eliminate several high-value targets.

Nawaz Sharif

"Sharif has said that the United States needs to end drone strikes," according to Kamran Bokhari, the director of Middle East analysis at the private intelligence firm STRATFOR. "Though he knows that you will say one thing when you're out of office, but do different things when in office, it would be difficult for Sharif to work aggressively with the United States in the war on terror." Most likely, Sharif would narrow the circumstances in which drone strikes could be authorized.

And in two other policy areas, a Sharif government would likely be uncongenial to the United States. It would probably take a more aggressive stance toward Kashmir, detracting from the fight against jihadists. "If Pakistan's military is geared to fight India," a high-level Pakistani official asked me, "how can they fight insurgents?"

And Sharif would likely push for the extension of *sharia* law, as he did both times he was prime minister (in 1990-1993 and 1997-1999). While this probably wouldn't threaten U.S. strategic interests, it would bode ill for Pakistan's women and religious minorities.

Sharif is aided in his rise by a sympathetic media, who ignore his shortcomings and help him "cultivate the image of a strong man who does not budge from his stance," in the words of commentator Yahya Hussaini. Officials in Zardari's government raised this concern with me. One complained that several recent pro-Sharif rallies were shown repeatedly on television before they had attracted many participants, and that the saturation coverage helped to increase their size.

The strong anti-American strand in Pakistan's media, moreover, indirectly aids Sharif. Thus, the message behind one music video that played frequently on Pakistani television during the recent crisis was that Pakistan's problems are caused by the American war in Afghanistan, not by jihadism. The video portrays a sinister-looking CIA agent and a cigar-smoking President Zardari cackling as a Predator strike kills an unjustly imprisoned Pakistani man who escapes from prison determined to "change the system of the country." Elsewhere in Pakistan's media, conspiracy-minded figures like commentator Ahmed Quraishi, who sees the hidden hand of the United States and India behind virtually all of Pakistan's ills, are reaching new prominence.

Against this turbulent backdrop, President Obama has correctly noted that Pakistan should not be given blank checks; in the past, the United States often failed to gear its aid toward American strategic interests. Pakistan remains the critical country in the war against al Qaeda, yet too little aid has been directed toward counterterrorism or counterinsurgency operations.

At the same time, the United States cannot be seen as meddling excessively in internal affairs. The challenge is to avoid that error, while still giving meaningful support where appropriate. The United States has a poor reputation for supporting its allies in times of crisis, and it is important that this view of America not be reinforced. With Nawaz Sharif waiting in the wings, Washington should be keenly aware that Zardari's government is far better aligned with America's strategic interests. ♦

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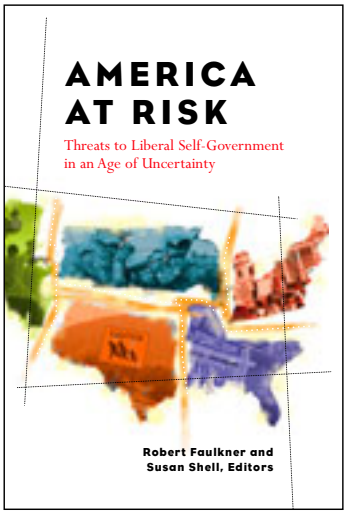
Threats to Liberal Self-Government in the Age of Uncertainty



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Honor Killing, American-Style

What science and Roe *v.* Wade *made possible has become virtually mandatory among our self-anointed elites.*

By Sam Schulman

President Obama's appointees, so diverse in many ways, have certain underlying similarities. In the standard categories of race, age, and sex, they are as diverse as any administration's before them—though they adhere to a standard of good looks quite unlike the most recent Democratic administration. Intellectually, Team Obama is just as inclusive: not just Harvard and Yale but Columbia and Cornell, Chicago South Siders and North Siders; stimulus enthusiasts (Christina Romer and Larry Summers) and stimulus skeptics (Romer and Summers in the 1990s). Strict orthodoxy reigns only on one issue—an issue which need not be on the president's overcrowded agenda at all: abortion. In the Obama administration there can be no dissent from the view that abortion must be unrestricted, paid for, and with no shilly-shallying about parental notification, partial birth abortion, or other such measures that would actually reduce the frequency of abortion.

The Obama rigidity reflects the fact that the adherence of our best and brightest to an ethic of abortion has become a question of honor—honor of a comparatively new variety, tied not to 'patriarchy' but to an interesting cocktail of feminism and upper-middle-class respectability.

Certain appointments stand out. For HHS, where abortion regulation resides, the president chose a Sadduccee of abortion purity, Kansas governor Kathleen Sebelius. Despite her kindly mien, Sebelius is a strict constructionist of abortion rights. As governor, she used her veto to maintain the rights of Kansans to obtain late-term abortions, performed by any means necessary, by providers of various degrees of competency, and in facilities—filthy or clean—of their choice. Only one Obama appointee outdoes her. Dawn Johnsen, appointed to head the Office of Legal Counsel at Justice, sees herself as the Lincoln of reproductive freedom. To restrict access to abortion is a kind of slavery, she wrote, "prohibited by the Thirteenth Amendment, in that forced pregnancy requires a woman to provide continuous physical service to the fetus."

On every issue other than abortion, Obama is content to let a hundred flowers bloom. It's odd because abortion is one of the few areas of national life that neither is in crisis, nor presents any political threat. But even odder, Obama's fundamentalism is athwart the genuine diversity of feeling on abortion among the American public. We hold a wide range of different, even logically inconsistent views on whether abortion is right or wrong, should be free of any restriction or abolished. We enjoy, moreover, considerable opinion-mobility on the issue. National sentiment swings for and against, reflecting changes in mood as well as the embarrassing fact that many of us have held all of these views at various times in our lives.

Americans form reliable majorities around two contradictory positions. One is that abortion is definitely wrong when it crosses the line dividing it from infanticide. (Of course where to draw that line remains at issue.) The other is that abortion is definitely permissible in certain cases: for victims of rape and incest, for mothers whose pregnancy threatens her health, for pregnancies where the fetus has a grave birth defect, and (sometimes) for one's own convenience. The juxtaposition of these two majority opinions for and against abortion, impossible to reconcile with one another, displays a profound civic virtue. Taken together,

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they certainly don't provide an answer to the moral and ethical quandaries of abortion. But they do make abortions available with fewer restrictions than in many other Western countries, they permit freedom of conscience to those who are left out of the consensus on both extremes of the issue, and they seem to have brought about a general willingness to observe the rule of law. The result is that even the most passionate among us live angrily in peace with equally angry neighbors.

One would expect that a new administration would be happy to leave in place a political arrangement that works so well—and so elegantly demonstrates that at home, we live by the virtues of engagement, diplomacy, and renunciation of force that we preach to others. But far from it. On January 23, Obama reversed the Mexico City Policy that restricted foreign aid to groups that do not provide abortion services—an international version of the Hyde Amendment. Obama is also poised to rescind a regulation protecting the "conscience exemption" on abortion for medical institutions and doctors and nurses (mainly Catholic), which allows them to decline to provide services that violate their beliefs.

Obama's intolerance of the conscientiousness of so many of us is particularly curious. In his inaugural address he declared his intention to perfect America's conscience. Not even in his most basic duty to provide for the common defense will he hesitate to choose American ideals at their best over the expediency of dealing roughly with our most violent enemies at their worst. Against those who would attack us, he threatens to unleash the full force of our tenderness. But to those Americans who wish merely to refrain from what they regard as harming babies—the president extends not a hand but a fist. (Respectable Catholic opinion is so enfeebled that Notre Dame feels safe in awarding the new president an honorary degree this spring—an honor denied to President Clinton for eight long years after *he* revoked the Mexico City policy.)

If we want to sympathize with the president, we can agree that pro-lifers may be naïve and deplorably sentimental. We can recognize that many of them are Roman Catholics, who elevate their bigoted allegiance to the pope over our national interest in reducing the number of girl babies in India, China, and Vietnam. But, still, indulging these hobbyhorses to some degree would not impede the core items on the Obama agenda. After all, what vital national interest requires that some Americans be compelled to participate in providing abortions against their will? And why must abortion be made even more free of regulation when we've just concluded that every other detail of our economic lives has, since about the time of the surrender of the American embassy in Tehran, been underregulated?

There is something more profound at play here than mere politics. The president's pitiless attack on freedom of conscience stems from something deeper and more primal than a lawyerly allegiance to human rights. The Obama rigidity, I think, reflects the fact that the adherence of our best and brightest to an ethic of abortion has become a question of honor—honor of a comparatively new variety, tied not to "patriarchy" and the traditional family, but to an interesting cocktail of feminism and upper-middle-class respectability. Abortion has become the instrument through which the best of us—feminists and college graduates—maintain our political and family honor.

To explain what I mean, I must make a very unpleasant analogy and ask you to think about a practice that, however bad you think abortion, is incomparably worse. Unlike abortion, its victims have names, such as Aasiya Zubair Hassan of Orchard Park, New York, who was decapitated in February (the police have arrested her husband for the crime); Sandela Kanwal of Atlanta, who was strangled by her father last year; and Aqsa Parvez of Peel, Ontario, whose father and brother may have strangled her in a "planned and deliberate act," according to police. These women are victims of honor killing, and they are among thousands killed every year for infidelity, for refusing to wear a head-covering, because they filed for divorce. Frequent in certain Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh communities in South Asia and the Middle East, honor crime is growing rapidly in Muslim communities in the West.

There can be no moral equation between abortion and honor killing. Even to abortion purists, abortion is sad—perhaps tragic—and to some degree it destroys a potential human being. At worst, it is a more civilized and sanitized version of infanticide. But even if you believe that abortion is murder, honor killing is aggravated murder of a more horrible kind. A husband, brother, or father kills a wife, sister, or daughter—and does so not out of selfishness or weakness, but from family feeling. Compared to ordinary murder, honor killing is as incest is to ordinary rape—a violation not only of a person, but of the kinship ties that make us human. We hate honor killing—but we have to recognize its place in a family structure that is maintained by a sense of honor.

When I associate abortion and honor killing, I am focusing not on the crime of honor killing, but on the honor code that motivates it. Just as abortion and even infanticide have no shortage of indignant and morally vain apologists among the most high-minded of us—the aforementioned Dawn Johnsen, for example, or Professor Peter Singer of Princeton—honor killing is defended as vital to the faith (in Islam) or to the caste system (in certain Hindu and Sikh communities) by some among the most religiously zealous and politically powerful classes where it thrives. In our world, our

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most admired, socially prestigious, and politically active churches—Unitarians, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Quakers, Reform Jews—express their allegiance to abortion rights in their most solemn declarations. But even for mainline Protestants, it is hard to be enthusiastic in a positive way about abortion. This hesitation is just as true for honor killing in Muslim and Hindu communities. In India, most police authorities and government prosecutors pursue and jail honor killers. But often honor killing is simply explained away. American Muslim leaders tend to insist that honor killing does not exist. The *New York Times* seems to forbid the use of the term without both scare quotes and a qualifying "so-called." American anti-American feminists (who tend to believe that Americans as a race are profoundly "Islamophobic") argue that honor killers are merely patriarchs in a hurry.

It is truer to say that abortion is not so much celebrated by our WASP elites, as its conscientious opponents are despised. The Unitarian Church conventionally hails the right to abortion. But the Unitarians become truly Unitarian when they formally condemn anyone who dares to exercise his political right to oppose abortion. Since the Clinton years, it has become fashionable to say that abortion is a grave event that ought to be less frequent—the president often says so himself. But to say this marks the limit of what can honorably be done. Woe to anyone who regards abortion as even more grave than the president does. Worse lies in store for those who observe that abortion becomes actually less frequent when certain regulations are imposed. Their pragmatism will be regarded as having hidden motives—motives that reveal religious bias, misogyny, and social inferiority.

Consider the reaction of horror—visceral, immediate, and continuing—to the Palin phenomenon.

Bristol Palin and brother Trig in August 2008

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In nice families there are certain affronts to family dignity that cannot be tolerated. Our notion of family honor demands that nothing interfere with the stately progression of our children from high school to a gap year of social service to a decent college to a respectable career. Various accidents of our biology, such as a high-school pregnancy or a prenatal test that reveals a birth defect are matters that can be handled discreetly and conveniently. What science and *Roe* v. *Wade* made possible has become mandatory. Ironically, our abortion fundamentalism has made our burgeoning upper middle class not more advanced and tolerant but more conventional and old-fashioned. In fact, the ability of our WASP-emulating elites to tolerate deviance from the norm has nearly withered away. We do not accuse our abortion refuseniks of heresy or tell their neighbors that they are secretly controlled by Israel—crimes of which the unfortunate Muslims who protest against honor killings are often accused—but we do believe that such people have committed gross social errors that make them unfit for decent society or high office.

Consider the reaction of horror—visceral, immediate, and continuing—to the Sarah Palin phenomenon of last fall. Educated women, conservative or liberal, young or old, couldn't get over her. A certain kind of finicky male conservative was even more scandalized—creating a reaction so intense that it struck them with the force of a religious conversion. Last October, I found this reaction, on the part of all, intelligent women and male *feinschmeckers* alike, hilarious and incomprehensible.

But I was wrong. We can understand it if we think of one particular affront that Palin presented to the best among us: flamboyant nubility. Sarah Palin decided to carry her Down syndrome baby to term. Bristol Palin not only decided to give birth to her illegitimate baby, but may have been encouraged to do so by her mother. Babies are born in these circumstances every day. But in the judgment of our most worldly women and of our most persnickety men, these births, however commonplace, offend propriety. To have one such baby may be regarded as a misfortune; to have both seems like carelessness.

The unapologetic fertility of this ordinary Alaska family became an obstacle that prevented many from thinking clearly about anything that Sarah Palin might have touched—John McCain, free trade, low taxes, the war on terror. A kind of honor-rage descended, and those whom it touched ran amok. And why not? In the language of honor, the fertility of the Palin women, mother and daughter, was shameless, but Palin didn't have the decency to be ashamed. And for our nicest women and our most carefully shielded conservative pundits, Palin's

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shamelessness was as gross a violation of the standard of honor as they ever had to face.

The Palin family saga holds the mirror up to our troubled assumptions about abortion. In 1949, Preston Sturges could have made a tender, sophisticated movie in which a sharp-shooting lady state governor (Rosalind Russell) and her ditzy unmarried-mom daughter (Betty Hutton) outwitted the snooty, sexually repressed columnist who disapproved of them (Loretta Young playing Sally Quinn). But 50 years later, the lower middle class has lost the power to show up the snobs. The sheer déclassé nature of the Palin story makes an aristocrat like Michael Wolff reel: "We see Palin for what she is. There are no hurdles for her to get over. The ordinariness, and randomness, and, even, perfidiousness, of small-town American life is the Palin story—and, as well, the publicity opportunity." Because it offended our sense of family honor, the unremarkable decision to have these babies seemed to unhinge those who speak for us, and the enormous quantity of bad writing on the subject—column after column—was a compensation for our inability to utter a deeply felt and widely shared sentiment: Bristol should not have had that baby—her mother should have marched her to the abortion clinic as she marched her to the orthodontist. And Sarah should have terminated that pregnancy.

Of course, based on the evidence that I, Sally, Peggy, Maureen, and Andrew have seen, we can only judge Sarah Palin's fecundity, not her competence as a mother. *People* magazine has asked us to look upon this picture and upon that: upon Bristol's baby bump and upon the Obama girls, so delightfully *bien élevées* by their mama. We are to conclude that Sarah Palin would not have made it as a mom at Lab, Sidwell, National Cathedral, or Hockaday. But we can't really be sure. Thank goodness, no one in public life is required to release the gynecological records of teenaged daughters in order to prove that they have not been pregnant. Bristol's failure to maintain her virtue proves only that her mother is unburdened by a sense of upper-middle-class honor. Ironically, even in their engagingly kooky and free-wheeling church, the Palins had more freedom to do what they pleased—or what they thought was right—than did the mainstream Protestant families whose daughters spared them the same ordeals. Still, we should recognize that the Park Avenue lawyer who worships at Brick Church (in the hope his children might be admitted to its superb nursery school) and despises the Palins is defending his family honor. So, in a different sense, are the Palins, when they accept the manifold features of the family with which their God has seen fit to bless them.

When we contemplate Palin's treatment at the hands of the respectable, it's evident that the Enlightenment, the Constitution, the Rights of Man, the Emancipation Proclamation, Darwin, Margaret Sanger, Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Friedan, and Richard Dawkins have not, after all, freed us from the burden of family honor. It still lives and bedevils the elites whom we elect as our leaders, whose manners we imitate and whose consciences we admire. Educated women in our society still have to observe a topsy-turvy code of honor that is every bit as stringent—and falls just as heavily upon their shoulders—as that which demanded sexual purity and modesty of any woman who wished to be respectable. And even in the world that the Obama administration deems respectable, the price of honor is paid by the woman, not the man. James Bowman writes that our best and brightest nowadays "regard themselves as being above the demand of honor." But they are not. Honor still demands violence against the individual for the sake of the family. These discreet medical procedures—shall we call them domestic contingency operations?—maintain the prestige, security, and respectability of the families we most admire.

Honor demands a life. If the challenge comes from outside ourselves—from a robber, a murderer, a nation that attacks our nation—then the challenger must die. But challengers and enemies to our social and familial arrangements can come from within our midst. To the traditional family where honor killing still takes place, a disobedient daughter or an unfaithful wife is a greater threat to honor than he who seduces her: A traitor is more culpable than an enemy. And here in liberal America, unwanted pregnancy is now considered a matter of honor so serious that it demands a life. It is the sign that women as a sex have obtained autonomy—and their ultimate ability to attain this rank is sustained by this ability to kill, just as a human being of either sex can use deadly force in self-defense or a nation can wage war to defend its citizens.

But abortion is also a tool to maintain upper-middle class family honor against a small, weak traitor in its midst—the fetus which reveals a daughter's errancy, a mother's failure to keep her daughter up to private-school standards, and most of all the failure of nature to fulfill our expectations in some way.

Whatever we think about the abortion issue, whatever heresy we may privately be committing, the president intends us to feel that our freedom to think as we do has been justly curtailed. When Obama defines the new heresy on abortion as strictly as he does, even though his manner is more WASPy than Wahhabi, he unintentionally undermines our ability to believe we can change one another's minds on the subject. This belief—which is quite justified by shifts in opinion since 1973—has made our political life relatively civil, compared to European norms. Obama forgets that the public are not members of his cabinet—we need to disagree with one another. But if we lose our WASP civility, now *that* will cause a fuss. ♦

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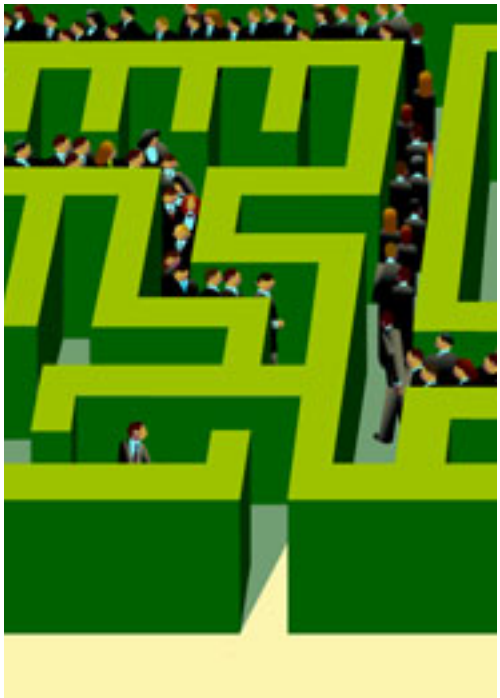
A Question for the Economists

Is the overly predicted life worth living?

By Harvey Mansfield

One group of those involved in the present financial crisis has so far escaped notice—the economists. They are masters in the science of prediction, but as a group, if not to a man, they failed to predict a crisis that has wiped out nearly half the wealth invested in the stock market and elsewhere (measured of course from the peak). The economists did no better than their unscientific rivals, the stock pickers, who are in the business of prediction.

Perhaps we need a second look not merely at the existing models by which economists predict but at the very idea of prediction as the goal of social science. Economists had been in the habit of asserting that they had come a long way since the Depression, that such an event could not happen again. Yet people are now actually speaking of another Depression as possible. Maybe we know how to avoid the Depression we had, but what about a new one with a new character we do not recognize? Isn't our present crisis new? Isn't every crisis new—since surprise is the essence of crisis? If prediction were reliable, we would be prepared for every chance, and our lives would be crisis-free and much duller.



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We can approach the idea of prediction by asking the economists a question they do not usually have to answer, which is this: In the present crisis is it better for citizens to spend or save? Or more generally, how do you economists recommend that we live?

To spend seems the civic thing to do—that's what the various proposals of stimulus are for—but to save seems more prudent, since most people will likely be receiving less income in the near future, perhaps considerably less. Which is better?

Already, readers who are economists will have given their reflex response, which is to say that our goal is to predict, not advise. But we mustn't let them dodge the question in this seemingly modest way. It's not really modesty to proclaim a goal, fail spectacularly to achieve it, and then disclaim the consequences. What they did in advance of this crisis was to make available mathematical models that promised to predict the risks of certain investments but actually obscured those risks. Did not this bad prediction constitute a recommendation of such investments? Isn't this what is called "enabling"?

Let us set aside blame, and see how the economists, despite what they often say, do actually advise us, not merely on particular investments but also more generally on how to live. We know that economists are not politically neutral; they are all either liberal or conservative or in-between. Either their analysis is politically driven from the beginning or it just comes out as political in one direction or another. It doesn't matter which, because a certain analysis harmonizes with a certain politics. The same is true of morality; economists are not morally, any more than politically, neutral. The moral tendency of

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economics has to do with prediction itself, and it is common to liberal and conservative economists.

The economists I know are generally, as individuals, sober and cautious, the most respectable of all professors and in their honesty and reliability representing the best in bourgeois virtue. But when they get together as economists, they give way to boyish irrational exuberance over the accomplishments and prospects of economics as a science.

What has happened in the last few months should give them pause. It should make them consider the necessity of looking at economics from the outside, at how it looks and behaves as a whole. There's no way to do this from within economics—no way to formulate an equation that will correctly predict the failure of equations to predict. The idea of prediction itself has to come into question. Prediction is designed to reduce the role of chance in our lives, eliminating unpleasant surprise and replacing it with gratitude and satisfaction. But somehow it doesn't have this effect.

The very measures we take to anticipate the future make us more dependent on others and less dependent on ourselves, because those measures consist in spreading the risks to which we are subject. Spreading the risk seems to reduce it by sharing it with others, but the sharing enlarges the network of an individual's involvement to encompass other agents, other factors beyond his ken. Without realizing it he joins a market, in which he may feel riskless but also feels weightless, no longer having influence of his own. His livelihood, his wealth, his life come to depend on the state of the "economy," even the global economy.

The economists I know are generally, as individuals, sober and cautious. But when they get together as economists, they give way to boyish irrational exuberance over the accomplishments and prospects of economics as a science.

The economy is not under an individual's control. If it were, or to the extent that it is, he would face the risk of controlling it well; this is the risk governments take when they try to take control of the economy on our behalf. Yet the economy does not control itself in steady or stable fashion. It does not control itself at all without episodes of great volatility such as we are now going through. Economics (like all science perhaps) aims at the reduction and control of risk. But who now has the sense that risk has been diminished and control over our lives vindicated by the science of economics?

One can see, on the contrary, that economics tends to aggravate our sense of feeling subject to chance. Return to the question of whether in present circumstances it is better to spend or save. Perhaps the correct economic answer would be, that depends on what is in your interest. It is sometimes in your interest to spend, sometimes to save, and you should calculate which it is just now. You should be flexible because the calculation may change and you must be ready to start saving and stop spending and the reverse.

The trouble, however, is that people look at others to see how they are calculating, and indeed they must do so in order to calculate correctly. What is in your interest becomes confused with what other people think is in their interest, and your calculation becomes shared, no longer yours. When choosing a stock, as Keynes said, you have to think not of who is the most beautiful girl at the ball but who will be considered the most beautiful by most people. Thus does your economic interest come to be determined by collective passions, by greed and fear. Hence follow crises of over- and underestimation, of bad calculation based on bad prediction.

Economics wants to be able to intervene to prevent such crises. Its notion of your economic self-interest would advise dampening both your fear and your greed, which is nothing other than buying low, when others are afraid, and selling high, when they are greedy. Fear and greed are not in your interest, and yet the recurrence of crises shows that consulting your interest will not stop them. The market is too fragile and too complicated to be controlled, and your interest is too subjective and too obscure to be known. The pursuit of self-interest with the general purpose of making yourself less subject to chance leads to your falling under the sway of fear and greed, thus more subject to chance. Government cannot prevent this result any more than can an individual; it is the common condition of civilized life in our times.

Thus the predictions of economists tend to give the impression that the economy can be predicted. Economists are intelligent people, well-connected and well-educated, gainfully employed in prestigious institutions. Although they rarely reach the top offices, they are often the top advisers to the top officers. So they seem to know what they are doing. They impart confidence in their predictions, which are often or mostly in the ballpark. Except when they are not, as at present. In a crisis the confidence they impart most of the time is exposed as overconfidence, a delusion that sets us up for surprise and disillusionment.

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We are not so surprised by the delusions of crowds and mobs—who does not know they are unreliable?—but that their delusions should be supported and promoted by scientists of the rank and caliber of economists might easily shake our confidence in the reliability of our elites and even of our scientific civilization.

Overconfidence in overcoming chance is the way of life recommended by economists. It is the way of life known as progress by liberals and as growth by conservatives, who are secretly united by overconfidence in their knowledge of the future which they describe diversely and call by different names. This recommended overconfidence transforms the predictions of economists into overall advice—not advice with a condition, such as if you want to get rich, do this, but advice on how to live while getting and being rich. Of course economics has been known as the dismal science because it confronts human necessities with the fact of scarcity, and in theories of overpopulation like that of Malthus, it may find that we will not get as much as we need. But it could also be called, whether dismal or promising, the triumphal or hubristic science for what it claims to be able to predict.

Now, the main consequence of living the overconfident life is to believe that virtue is not necessary. Perhaps this is the main cause as well as consequence of that life. Virtue is a chancy quality because you may not have it or live up to it. It seems less reliable than self-interest with its allies, fear and greed. Everybody has self-interest, which is not true of virtue. But at least virtue does not depend on predicting the future. On the contrary, virtue is a resource for everyone when bad times come—something to fall back on, to give cheer, to restore. On top of that, virtue will save you from being corrupted by good fortune as well. This is the great truth taught by the Stoics.

Virtue is a habit, not a calculation. It reflects the fact that human beings live in an overall way of life, in diverse ways of life; it is not possible for us, or most of us, to live perfectly flexibly, always ready to calculate anew in fresh circumstances what it is in our interest to do. Thus the ideal of calculated self-interest posited by economics is not a human possibility. We will get in the habit of being spenders or savers and will not be able to turn on a dime, changing our behavior when our interest changes. Indeed our selves are not independent of our ways of life, and it is not possible to calculate your self-interest without knowing your way of life.

Economics needs to stop trying to duck responsibility for what it recommends. It needs to examine the whole of life and to focus on the virtue or virtues of different ways of life. It should give over talk about "preferences," as if human desires were given facts unaffected by the science of economics. It should abandon the crude positivism that claims that one can study facts without giving advice, or that one can confidently predict without causing people to believe in one's predictions. It needs to replace its false modesty with true moderation. ♦

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John Travolta and Diana Princess of Wales, the White House, 1985

Regals and Eagles

The lure of the House of Windsor BY GEOFFREY WHEATCROFT

In the autumn of 1985 I was in Washington when the "Treasure Houses of Britain" show at the National Gallery was opened by the prince and princess of Wales (a royal visit fabled in the thousand-year story of the English monarchy as the occasion when the princess took to the dance floor with John Travolta). Then I returned to the Athens on the Potomac in the spring of 1988 and was taken to a dinner where President Reagan was the guest of honor.

Two things struck me. On the latter occasion, an Englishman was bound to notice the almost reverential manner in which the president was regarded, even by journalists who felt no political sympathy for him. It was all unlike the genial derision with which we treat London politicians, in private or even in public. But before that, the adulation surrounding the royal couple made me realize that the American spirit of equality and republican virtue was not all that it was supposed to be.

The Eagle and the Crown
Americans and the British Monarchy
by Frank Prochaska
Yale, 240 pp., $40

Was it possible that the Yanks were as snobbish as the Limeys, or even more so?

Well, "there is a natural inclination in mankind to Kingly Government," or so Benjamin Franklin said, in words which Frank Prochaska quotes as an epigraph to this highly informative and enjoyable new book. It might surprise Franklin's admirers to know just how how much he once revered George III: No Frenchman, he wrote after dining at Versailles in 1767, "shall go beyond me in thinking my own king and queen the very best in the World and the most amiable." The Founding Fathers were, after all, transplanted Englishmen, and by inheritance Tories as much as radicals.

A seditious pamphleteer like Thomas Paine might denounce monarchy as "the Popery of government"—the very phrase a reminder, by the way, of how strongly Protestant, and virulently anti-Catholic, was the American sentiment he addressed. But the American rebellion, like any other event in history, was not inevitable. It remains a fascinating "what if" to suppose what would have happened had the London government been less pigheaded in its treatment of the colonists. Although it's not so likely

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that, by the end of the 21st century, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand will share a sovereign with England, the fact that the queen is still their head of state as the century begins is remarkable enough. Might she have been Queen Elizabeth of America also?

After Yorktown and the formal separation, Americans visiting England found much they still liked and admired about their former monarch, "industrious, sober and temperate . . . a great and wise king," said John Jay, George Washington's trade envoy to London in 1794. To be sure, attitudes to England and its monarchy divided America, Anglophile Federalists against Anglophobe Jeffersonians. But then Jefferson was at this time infatuated with the French Revolution, and even tolerant towards its bloody Terror.

By the next century, other long and short royal affairs would be grist for the mill of the very fast-expanding transatlantic press: One of the things I learned from *The Eagle and the Crown* was that fewer than 200 American newspapers in 1800 had become 3,000 by 1850. The lurid public failure of the marriage of that couple who came to Washington in 1985, and the subsequent antics of Princess Diana, followed by her sad death and the weird ensuing cult, with its overtones of Latin American peasant hagiology, rang historical bells.

In 1820, the case of Queen Caroline, sued by George IV for adultery, electrified Americans. Their press went into paroxysms of righteous wrath on behalf of "this unfortunate woman, who, alone and unprotected, has stood as yet unmoved and unsullied amid the tempest of filth and calumny with which she has been assailed by the royal debauchee, her husband, and his sycophantic allies."

One way or another English royalty continued to exercise a thrall over Americans. While Queen Victoria, whose astonishingly long reign began as Andrew Jackson's presidential term ended, and ended as the first President Roosevelt's began, was no Charlotte or Diana, she was deeply admired in America. Indeed "Victoria Fever" and "Queen Mania" much annoyed some American patriots. And her son the prince of Wales seemed to Americans a figure of immense glamour.

In late 1860, he paid the first of what would be many visits by royalty to the United States. "No president could excite such a fervor," the *New York Times* recorded, and there was endless speculation about whether the 18-year-old prince would find an American bride. The only discordant note—also inaugurating a long tradition—came from Irish malcontents, complaining about "the spirit of flunkeyism."

But if Irish Americans resented the English royal family, African Americans loved them. When the prince of Wales arrived, slavery had been abolished in the British Empire for a generation, but persisted in the South. The prince received from "the Colored Citizens of Boston" an "expression of their profound and grateful attachment for that Throne which you represent here, under whose shelter so many thousands of their race, fugitives from American Slavery, find safety and rest." And in 1873, the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University visited England and performed for "the grandest and noblest queen of them all," whose flag had "sheltered so many in the dark days of bondage."

On both sides of the Atlantic some believed that the two countries were united, not least by "a hatred of what is not just or free," as the British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey would say. This could take the form of "Anglo-Saxonism" and an unabashed belief in the racial superiority of these "English-speaking peoples."

At the same time, on the American side, there was also unmistakably what Australians would later call a cultural cringe: As Senator Henry Cabot Lodge said, any American with literary aspirations pretended to be an Englishman "in order that he might win the approval, not of the Englishmen, but of his own countrymen." And the infatuated Anglomania of the American rich during the Gilded Age reflected the harder economic fact that the United States was still, to a large extent, a financial dependency of the City of London. In his novel *Democracy*, Henry Adams dryly remarked on "the respect which all republicans who have a large income derived from business feel for English royalty."

And yet—this is something Prochaska could have examined—there was a strong contrary current of political and military hostility to the English. In 1895, amid a frenzy of sabre-rattling Anglophobia, President Cleveland nearly went to war against Great Britain, and in 1914 President Wilson feared that he might have to do so. As it turned out, the two countries became military allies, in 1917-18 and again in 1941-45, and here the royals played their part. The latest prince of Wales visited America in 1919 and, despite what his aide, Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey, called "disgruntled Irishmen and a very doubtful lot of hyphenated Americans," the tour was a brilliant success.

Once again it was endlessly wondered whether the prince would wed an American "gal." When one intrepid female reporter put the question to him directly, he said he would if he fell in love with one. And so he did. Alas, it was Wallis Simpson of Baltimore, who precipitated the greatest crisis for the monarchy in centuries. The gloriously snobbish (and brilliantly observant) diarist Chips Channon complained that, since he met her, the prince's manner had become "Americanized," by which he meant "over-democratic, casual and a little common."

Needless to say, Americans were fascinated by the romance, and some believed that a shot of New World blood was just what the kingly line needed, now that the prince had become Edward VIII. In England the feeling was very different, from Leo Amery's astonishment that the king could put his duty behind "his affection for a second-rate woman" to Queen Mary's reaction to the very idea that her son might marry a twice-divorced American: "Really! This might be Rumania!"

After the abdication, Edward's shy, less glamorous, but more solid brother succeeded as George VI, and won American hearts on a visit in the summer of 1939. Even some Irish Americans softened. President Roosevelt had made his single worst appointment in the appalling form of Joseph P. Kennedy as

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ambassador to the Court of St. James, but that corrupt anti-Semitic bigot and appeaser was susceptible to royal allure: "Rose, this is a helluva long way from East Boston," he said to his wife when they spent the weekend at Windsor Castle. And when their son Jack attended a formal court levée, he had no objection to wearing knee breeches, "in which I look mighty attractive."

After a greater war had been fought and won, Americans were captivated again by the pretty young queen who was crowned in 1953. (Among those covering the coronation was a star-struck reporter for the Washington *Times-Herald* called Jacqueline Bouvier.) Royal visits continued: first the Queen Mother, as George VI's widow now was, and then the queen in 1957. She and President Eisenhower found an unlikely bond in their shared enthusiasm for baking, exchanging recipes for scones, and other humble fare.

Initially at least, the queen's children were less of a hit. The present prince of Wales, well-meaning but gauche, did his best with President Nixon in 1970, but his sister Princess Anne, who accompanied him on that visit, "made no effort to conceal a mood of incredulity and vague discomfort," wrote the *New York Times*—not that she always struck her compatriots much differently.

And so to Prochaska's penultimate chapter, "A Wedding and a Funeral," with that visit of 1985 coming between them. My recollection of an awestruck America was not so wrong. *Time* called Charles and Diana "the most glamorous couple" on earth, and the *New York Times* reported that "the British have landed and Washington is taken." *The Eagle and the Crown* is very well illustrated, and there are two wonderful photographs from this period, of Princess Diana smiling in her knowing gamine way next to a chuckling Henry Kissinger, and of President Reagan laughing uproariously as a completely stony-faced queen reads her speech. What was the joke he got but she didn't?

Nor was my perception of the president as a kind of royalty so wrong—or so original. As Prochaska says, the Founding Fathers were more monarchical in their assumptions than is widely believed, and they created a veiled monarchy. Many others have seen this. Henry Clay complained in 1833 about the "elective monarchy," William Seward told an English journalist that "we elect a king for four years," and Theodore Roosevelt, "not one to minimise the powers of his office," likewise described the president as an "elective King."

What Prochaska might have added is that there has been a curious historical twist. Although consciously in reaction from England, the Founding Fathers unconsciously copied an English model, which was then preserved immutably by the Constitution. But over the next century and more what Walter Bagehot called "the English constitution"—unwritten and therefore flexible—changed out of recognition. It came to combine two crucial characteristics, constitutional monarchy and parliamentary government. Head of state was thus separated from head of government, the former a decorative sovereign who reigns but does not rule and who accepts the advice of a prime minister, defined in turn as the person who, at any moment, commands a majority in the House of Commons. In curious consequence, the British political system now bears no resemblance to the England of 1776—which the American political system closely resembles. The president is very like George III, his own chief executive who may or (as recently in Washington) may not command a legislative majority, and rules by a mixture of fiat, cajolery, appeals to loyalty, and outright bribery.

Meantime, while American absorption in the doings of our more or less wayward royals seems undiminished, the dynastic principle is in eclipse in England but flourishes across the ocean in the noble houses of Kennedy, Gore, Bush, and Clinton. Maybe Prochaska is right: What distinguishes England and America is the difference between a disguised republic and a disguised monarchy. ♦

Handy's Version

There's a story behind the story of 'St. Louis Blues.'

BY TED GIOIA

On Beale Street in Memphis, passersby can see a life-sized statue of W.C. Handy, often lauded as "The Father of the Blues." But another public monument, a short distance away, commands even more respect from the tourists: a nine-and-a-half foot bronze of Elvis Presley.

There is some heavy symbolism here. Many would carp that Handy, born in Alabama a decade after the Emancipation Proclamation, fathered the blues only for white musicians such as Presley to reap the benefits. Others would take a kinder view of the King, seeing his advocacy of the blues as the decisive turning point that brought this music into the mainstream of American (and eventually global) popular culture.

W.C. Handy
The Life and Times of the Man Who Made the Blues
by David Robertson
Knopf, 304 pp., $27.95

As Muddy Waters famously proclaimed: "The blues had a baby and they named it Rock and Roll."

Yet Handy's role is just as problematic as Presley's. The more one probes into his biography, the less secure are the frequently encountered generalizations about his contributions to American music. Even his cherished role as Father of the Blues is hard to justify, and his admirers may have to

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settle for the far less flattering title of "Transcriber of the Blues."

Until now, readers who wanted to learn about W.C. Handy had few options. The only complete account of his life has been his own version, published as *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography* in 1941. This book was hardly an objective account, and is more a starting point for the Handy legend than a reliable biographical guide. And it is a legend that appears to have more than a few holes in it: My own research into Handy's career and the nature of early blues has made me wary of many of the claims in his memoirs. Yet no full-scale critical biography exists to round out the picture of this celebrated American life.

So I welcomed David Robertson's biography as a chance for someone finally to set the record straight. Yet one need only read the subtitle to see that this author doesn't want to rock the boat. The market favors heroic biographies, not nit-picky reassessments, and Robertson is willing to oblige. Yet Handy, more than any other blues figure of his generation, needs a probing biographer who refuses to take dubious claims at face value.

Let's set the record straight: W.C. Handy did not invent or "make" the blues. We can find evidence of blues music throughout the South dating back to the 19th century, whereas Handy had never heard blues music before 1903 at the earliest. Handy wasn't even the first to perform blues on Beale Street. (That honor goes to the Charlie Bynum and Jim Turner band.)

One can hardly even support Robertson's weaker claim that Handy was the "Father of the Commercialization of the Blues." Certainly the 1920 recording of Handy's "St. Louis Blues," performed by Marion Harris, was a major success; but Harris was a white singer destined for a career in vaudeville and movies. In contrast, Mamie Smith's million-selling recording of "Crazy Blues" that same year (unmentioned by Robertson) was the event that validated the recording of African-American musicians as a commercial proposition. After Smith, companies wanted to market black musicians to black audiences, and the recording of a wide range of blues performers, both urban and rural, now could take place in earnest.

W.C. Handy, 1940

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES

Then again, how are we to assess Handy's claim that he had a big blues hit even before "St. Louis Blues" with "Mr. Crump" (1909), composed to help Edward "Boss" Crump in his campaign for mayor of Memphis? Robertson follows Handy's own account, and even amplifies it. He announces that "as a popular American cultural phenomenon" there had been nothing comparable since "Jump Jim Crow" from 1828. Yet our biographer quickly glosses over the inconvenient fact that even Boss Crump later claimed he was unaware of the song at the time—hard to reconcile with Handy's (and Robertson's) claims for its fame. As for Handy's private opinion on the matter, his true assessment of the value of this song might best be measured by his decision to sell all rights to it for $50.

Handy rarely made such bad decisions again. He managed to retain the copyright for "St. Louis Blues," and at the time of his death in 1958, it was bringing him $25,000 in annual income—around $200,000 in today's dollars. There is a success story here, but it would emphasize Handy's acumen as a black businessman in an industry dominated by white power brokers, many of them notably predatory. Handy is one of the pioneering black entrepreneurs in the history of African-American music, and a true measure of his importance shouldn't lose sight of this notable achievement.

Yes, this is an inspirational story. A young man from Alabama defies his devoutly religious family and goes on the road with a (white-owned) black minstrel troupe. He travels widely but eventually takes a job as a bandleader in the Mississippi Delta, where he hopes to perform marches à la Sousa, but instead stumbles by chance upon the 12-bar blues at a train station in Tutwiler. Handy needs to overcome his own prejudices against this music before he can appreciate its primal beauty, and even more its commercial potential. Yet he eventually derives more financial success out of the blues than all of the early Delta blues guitar legends combined.

Even Handy himself seemed to realize that his business savvy was as important as his musical technique. When he got embroiled in a public debate with Jelly Roll Morton, who ridiculed Handy's claims as a musical innovator, Handy essentially admitted he couldn't play jazz (he was strictly a "reading" musician). But he boasted that at least he had "vision enough to copyright and

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publish all the music I wrote so I don't have to go around saying that I made up this piece and that piece in such and such a year like Jelly Roll."

Both claimants were right, according to my court of appeal. Morton was the great innovator of jazz, and Handy was a shrewd businessman. Yet this story only appears sporadically here. David Robertson has published three previous books, none of them on music, but he seems to believe that Handy's reputation must live or die by establishing him as a worthy counterpart to John Philip Sousa and George Gershwin and Charles Ives. This effort is doomed to failure. There are many good passages here, especially when Robertson addresses the personal and sociological angles on Handy's life; but the weakest parts are those dealing with the most important issues. Here Robertson turns off his critical thinking and resorts to convenient mythmaking.

This comes to the fore in his account of Handy's greatest achievement, the composition of "St. Louis Blues." There must be a fascinating story behind the commercial success of this song. It had little impact at the time of its publication in 1914, yet it eventually became one of the most frequently recorded compositions of the first half of the 20th century—surpassed, according to one measure, only by "Silent Night."

How much did Handy's close ties to the New York recording industry spur this turnabout? And though the blues elements in the song are heralded by Robertson, how important was Handy's equally provocative use of the Cuban *habanera* rhythm? Robertson passes quickly over Handy's trip to Cuba as a young man while he devotes 10 times as much space to his work in a minstrel troupe. Yet this visit was an important moment in American music history, and clearly played a role in the appeal of this famous tune.

W.C. Handy remains an intriguing figure, and his life story makes for uplifting reading. But there is still a need for an incisive biography that is less adulatory and more skeptical of the composer's own claims. ♦

Founder's Killing

The strange death of a pioneering jurist.

BY NELSON D. LANKFORD

"Instead of haggling on half-way measures," George Wythe demanded an absolute break with Great Britain and root-and-branch revolution at home. He was one of the most erudite of the Founders, a delegate to the Continental Congress, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Yet his greatest legacy was to the law, both as a jurist and a teacher. He later served as chancellor of Virginia's Chancery Court, a poorly remunerated post but one that allowed him to indulge his love for the law and to transmit that affection to generations of students.

I Am Murdered
George Wythe, Thomas Jefferson, and the Killing That Shocked a New Nation
by Bruce Chadwick
Wiley, 288 pp., $24.95

As a new century dawned, this kindly old widower had become a familiar sight to the citizens of Richmond, the state capital. His hair had thinned and his aquiline nose seemed more prominent with age, but his intense blue eyes still sparkled as he tottered along the cobblestone streets, gold-headed cane in hand, dressed in an out-of-fashion black broadcloth coat, short pants, and silver shoe buckles. He had lived to see his most famous pupil elected president of the Republic, and thus his murder in 1806 at the age of 80 struck Thomas Jefferson as "such an instance of depravity [as] has been hitherto known to us only in the fables of the poets."

Wythe's demise came on the heels of another outrage when a Virginia farmer hacked nine family members to death with an ax. Only five years before, panic over Gabriel's Rebellion had yielded its gruesome harvest of slaves judicially murdered for plotting to slay their masters. These earlier events fueled the belief that violent crime was on the upswing, and primed Richmonders to greet the circumstances of George Wythe's murder with horror. This is the context for the tale that the prolific writer Bruce Chadwick tells in his latest book.

On Sunday, May 25, 1806, Wythe took breakfast as usual from the hands of his free black housekeeper of many years, Lydia Broadnax. Shortly after, the chancellor doubled over in pain from acute and unrelenting gastric distress. The same symptoms prostrated Broadnax and Michael Brown, a free mixed-race youth who lived in the house and, according to some sources, was Broadnax's son. Others said he was Broadnax and Wythe's son. The old man lingered in agony for two weeks. Brown died before him; Broadnax recovered, her eyesight permanently impaired. Suspicion immediately fell on a fourth member of the household, Wythe's grandnephew and namesake.

George Wythe Sweeney and young men like him flocked to the bustling state capital, a boom town built on tobacco and slave trading. It was not the study of law that attracted Sweeney to his great uncle's house, however, but its proximity to the brothels and gambling dens down the hill in Shockoe Bottom. Wythe, of "dovelike simplicity and gentleness of manner," doted on the 18-year-old wastrel, who repaid kindness by forging his great uncle's

Nelson D. Lankford, editor of the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, *the quarterly journal of the Virginia Historical Society, is the author, most recently, of* Cry Havoc! The Crooked Road to Civil War, 1861.

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name on checks to cover gambling debts. He also probably pawned law books and a missing terrestrial globe that the old man meant to bequeath to Jefferson. Wythe knew about Sweeney's thievery but discouraged his bankers from pressing charges.

On the Sunday morning in question, Sweeney ostentatiously drank a cup of coffee in front of Lydia Broadnax and hurriedly left the house. Just after he poured his coffee from the pot, she saw him toss a small white paper into the fire. It meant nothing to her at the time but in retrospect was "monstrous strange." A later search of Sweeney's room turned up a vial of arsenic.

A week after he was stricken, Wythe learned that Michael Brown had succumbed. As convulsions wracked his dehydrated body, the chancellor summoned his lawyer. Brown, though a freed slave, had stood to share much of Wythe's estate with Sweeney. Indeed, the chancellor's will asked the president of the United States to assume the care of Brown, whom Wythe was tutoring in the classics.

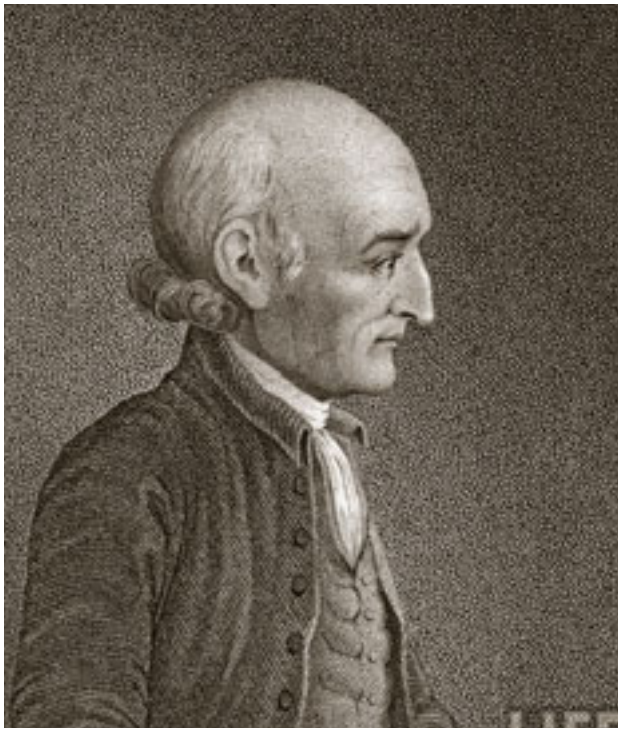
As friends gathered around his bed, he moaned "I am murdered!" but had the strength to dictate a codicil to his will. It disinherited Sweeney entirely. Wythe did not name his grandnephew as his killer; there was no need.

Two days after Wythe fell ill, the feckless Sweeney forged his name on one more check. He dumbfounded the magistrate who arraigned him by asking that the dying Wythe post bond. Sweeney was thus already in jail for forgery when Wythe died, and he remained there until charged with murder.

The city of Richmond decreed trappings of public mourning more effusive than those observed at the death of George Washington seven years before. Wythe's remains lay in state in the gleaming new capitol designed by Jefferson, the first neoclassical building in America. Another Wythe protégé, William Munford, delivered an affecting eulogy that, toward the end, startled his audience by denouncing Sweeney without naming him.

Even if Munford had not condemned Sweeney publicly, few citizens doubted the young man's guilt. Gossip mongers speculated about who would be foolish enough to defend such a heinous criminal.

Rising attorney William Wirt doubted Sweeney's innocence, but that hardly set him apart from his usual clients. Wirt had pointedly shunned George Wythe's example, joking that he might otherwise "grow old in judicial honors and Roman poverty." Honor, he quipped, "will not go to market and buy a peck of potatoes." And so he made a name for himself defending rogues like Sweeney. Indeed, he needed Sweeney: If he could exonerate him, he might wipe clean the public humiliation of his last case, a spectacularly failed defense of a gutter journalist.



George Wythe

Even more astonishingly, Edmund Randolph joined Wirt for the defense. He had been a delegate to the Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention, governor of Virginia, and Washington's attorney general. But he resigned in disgrace, accused of influence peddling, and earned Washington's wrath for subsequent disloyalty. Considered a waffler by some—Jefferson called him "the purest chameleon I ever saw"—Randolph, like Wirt, sought vindication in the courtroom.

But how could he defend Sweeney? He had been one of the first to rush to his old friend's deathbed. Indeed, Randolph was the lawyer who wrote Sweeney out of the will at Wythe's dying request.

Wirt and Randolph hated one another but put that aside for the moment and yoked themselves to Sweeney in hopes of an improbable courtroom victory. It would be improbable because, by then, the whole city knew the sordid details, how the dissolute Sweeney repeatedly betrayed his great uncle, how they found arsenic in his room, how he would inherit even more once Michael Brown was out of the way (though, in this last detail, the rumors were out of date).

The most eminent doctors in Virginia had examined Wythe. The lead physician, James McClurg, enjoyed an international reputation and an ego to match. He doubted Wythe's insistence that he had been poisoned. He thought, instead, that his symptoms suggested cholera—despite the fact that cholera had not yet made an appearance in America.

Then, on the witness stand, McClurg speculated that a buildup of black bile could have killed Wythe, not cholera, and probably not arsenic. Two colleagues agreed. They conceded arsenic might have been the cause, but they could not be sure. In fact, they had botched the autopsy: They had not conducted standard tests available to them for detecting arsenic and focused on black bile found in both Wythe's and Michael Brown's bodies. The fact that stomach inflammation and a build-up of bile occurred with arsenic poisoning

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seemed not to have troubled them. The doctors, Chadwick concludes, transformed the case into "a colossal medical and forensic nightmare."

There was still the testimony of Lydia Broadnax to sway the jury against Sweeney. She was proof that George Wythe had been no hypocrite about slavery. He opposed it on moral grounds, urged legislation against it, and decided court cases against slaveholders' rights. Long before, he had freed his slaves, including Broadnax, who remained with him as a devoted housekeeper.

The jury, however, never heard from Broadnax for a simple, straightforward, and racist reason. Under Virginia law, the word of an African American could not be used in court against a white person. Nor could any white witness be called to repeat her statement collected by the preliminary investigation. The doctors' inept performance and the inadmissibility of Broadnax's testimony doomed the prosecution, and the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. Not convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt, the jury opted for acquittal.

Yet amid public shock at the verdict, the *Richmond Examiner* admitted it was the law banning the testimony of blacks against whites that freed Sweeney. When Wythe and Jefferson had radically reformed Virginia's statutes in the middle of the revolution, Wythe had let that ban stand. Three decades later it enabled his murderer to escape the hangman.

Bruce Chadwick is a competent and experienced writer, with numerous historical accounts to his credit. It is unfortunate, then, that he stumbles occasionally in small matters. For example, he describes the Virginia capitol as a Greek temple built of white marble. It is, in fact, stuccoed brick, Jefferson's paean in humble masonry to the Roman temple in Nîmes.

Moreover, Chadwick's narrative sometimes awkwardly loops back on itself, the fault of oddly sequenced chapters on earlier periods in Wythe's and Jefferson's lives. And the author indulges in too many shorter digressions: lurid tales of arsenic poisonings, the spread of cholera, and the body snatchers who supplied corpses to medical schools. Diverting as these anecdotes may be, they militate against a taut unfolding of the main story. Chadwick also struggles with an apparent shortage of key primary sources. For example, we never hear directly from the defendant. Presumably nothing in his own words survives to give that vital dimension of the story its own voice.

After acquitting Sweeney of Wythe's murder, the court dropped the same charge concerning Brown and convicted Sweeney of forgery. It sentenced him to six months in jail and an hour in the public pillory. He still escaped punishment. The law, his attorneys discovered, left a loophole regarding bank forgery, a loophole that his case goaded the legislature to close. Sweeney himself soon disappeared, like thousands of other restless young men, into the wilds of the frontier West, and nothing more was heard of him.

Despite Chadwick's shortcomings as a narrator, he has rescued from obscurity a once-celebrated murder case involving a Founding Father in the tumultuous early years of the Republic—another world, now long past, foreign in so many ways to our sensibilities, yet peopled with familiar human appetites and frailties. The story calls to mind the words of the British historian George Macaulay Trevelyan: "The poetry of history," he mused, "lies in the quasi-miraculous fact that once, on this familiar spot of ground, walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone, one generation vanishing after another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone like ghosts at cock-crow." ♦

Diamond Judges

The men (and occasional woman) behind the plate.

BY JOHN C. CHALBERG

Baseball fans beware: A *New York Times* theater critic has written one fascinating baseball book. But be forewarned: Read it, and you may never watch a ball game in quite the same way again. Digest it, and you're likely to catch yourself following the umpire instead of the flight of the ball or the fielder chasing it. Take it to heart, and you'll find yourself thinking about, perhaps even caring about, umpires.

As They See 'Em
A Fan's Travels in the Land of Umpires
by Bruce Weber
Scribner's, 352 pp., $26

Agree with it, and you may wind up mistaking a baseball game for a play. Leave it to a theater critic to draw an analogy between these two art forms. But Bruce Weber is not alone. It seems that the veteran pitcher David Cone and the veteran umpire Tim McClelland agree with him. Both feature characters, suspense, and resolution, with the umpire often playing a crucial dramatic role.

Yes, Weber has thought a good deal about umpires—perhaps too much. What's more, he's come to care about umpires—perhaps too much. What's worse, we learn that umpires secretly want to be cared about—certainly too much.

Taking a page from the late George Plimpton, Weber decided to become an umpire in order to write about him—and, very occasionally, her. How better to explain the highs and lows of umpire school than to be a student umpire? How better to detail the ins and outs of an umpire's daily life than to live the life of an

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umpire on the road? And how better to follow the highs and lows, the ins and outs of a baseball before it thuds into the catcher's mitt than to be the man in blue crouched right behind this endlessly repeated drama?

Just don't call the umpire "blue." That term, we learn, is reserved for amateurs, and Weber's umpires run the gamut from eager apprentice pro to major league veteran. But no matter their status or standing, many umpires seem to complain, in the Rodney Dangerfield vein, that they get no respect. The umpire as victim? Leave it to a journalist to find one more aggrieved group in our land, and this particular collection of victims turns out to be "unusually isolated and circumscribed." Outsiders who are wary of outsiders, umpires represent no one but themselves. "Universally reviled" for doing nothing more than making sure that the "greatest American game is played fairly," the umpire's "plight," as Weber inelegantly puts it, "genuinely stinks."

Yet if Weber cares about his beleaguered umpires, team managers don't. As Jim Leyland of the Detroit Tigers puts it, the umpire is the poor sap who "never plays a home game." Not that managers were anxious to talk with Weber about umpires. They weren't. Nor, for that matter, were the umpires themselves. During his excursion into umpire land, Weber found that their "collective reticence" was matched only by their "collective defiance." But that defiance has generally been of the silent sort, as umpires have yet to master the art of victimhood. And no wonder. In "umpire nation" Weber discovers a society of "rock-solid traditions" and a place "buried deep in the conservative middle-American heart."

Not that politics drives this story. But Weber is troubled by the fact that there have been only six black umpires in the history of major league baseball. Equally unsettling to him is the treatment accorded the occasional female umpire by her male counterparts. Nevertheless, the biggest issue for Weber is the treatment that all umpires have received at the hands (and feet) of that fearsome entity Organized Baseball. Here Weber agrees with ex-commissioner Fay Vincent: The owners, according to Vincent, regard umpires as the equivalent of bases. They are a "necessary expense" that no one in authority need "pay much attention to."

Weber also suggests that team owners revel in kicking around umpires and their union because they have been so thoroughly kicked around for so long by the players and *their* union. All of which leads the author to find one more reason to pity the poor umps since they, too, have been kicked around by a union—namely their own. In a chapter simply titled "The 22," Weber recounts the "umpire cataclysm" of 1999, or union chief Richie Phillips's infamous mass resignation strategy that backfired, costing a number of veterans their jobs.

Of course, Organized Baseball thought that it was finally getting rid of some incompetent umpires, but Weber begs to differ. Which raises a larger question: Just how competent are these guys? Weber's judgment is that umpires do an amazingly impressive job under amazingly difficult circumstances.

Fair enough again, but Weber can't quite leave well enough alone. To drive his point home he returns to the scene of a few controversial calls, the last of which is Don Denkinger's blown call that Cardinals fans still think cost their team the 1985 World Series against the Royals. Now retired, Denkinger was and remains "an umpire's umpire," but he "erred, indisputably," even "inexplicably," when his safe call on a play that "wasn't all that close" gave the Royals life, and eventually the win, in Game Six.

At first glance, Weber's decision to recall the Denkinger call is, itself, inexplicable. Having killed the umpires with kindness, he concludes by stoking those inextinguishable kill-the-umpire fires. Or does he? In his own version of those infamous innings he reminds readers that the Cardinals managed to lose Game Seven all by themselves, 11-0. He also uses the Denkinger episode to revisit the umpire's plight. Says Weber: It's ultimately not whether umpires make mistakes or not; of course they do. It's that they are "aggressive, competitive men" who have chosen a trade in which they "literally can't win and figuratively don't."

To Weber, such a choice, while not necessarily a bad call all its own, is both "odd and poignant"—and, perhaps, inexplicable as well. ♦

Umpire Randy Marsh in negotiation, 2002

ASSOCIATED PRESS / DAVID J. PHILLIP

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Southern Gothic

The universal voice in Milledgeville, Georgia.

BY SHAWN MACOMBER

It is a great, albeit somewhat paradoxical, compliment to Brad Gooch that, midway through *Flannery*, readers may be tempted to set the book aside unfinished. His portrait of the singular Georgia author who improbably wed contemporary Southern Gothic literature's hardboiled, earth-bound sensibility to a believer's transcendent fire-and-brimstone vision of fallen man's ancient tribulation is so exquisitely rendered that, as the end draws nigh, the thought of watching O'Connor—a mere 39 years old and at the height of her powers—suffer and die of the same lupus that snatched her father from her as a child becomes a bit much to bear.

Flannery
A Life of Flannery O'Connor
by Brad Gooch
Little, Brown, 464 pp., $30

It is O'Connor herself, drawling from the pages of *Flannery*, that puts the kibosh on such sentimental squeamishness. This is a woman, after all, who when reluctantly schlepped off to the holy grotto at Lourdes ("I am one of those people who could die for his religion sooner than take a bath for it") later confided that she had, despite her grave illness and unwavering faith, nonetheless "prayed there for the novel I was working on, not for my bones, which I care about less." Scant weeks before shuffling off this mortal coil, O'Connor was revising stories and correcting proofs of *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, frequently from a hospital bed, unbowed to the end.

"The world was made for the dead," Mason Tarwater, the crazed backwoods prophet tells his nephew in *The Violent Bear It Away*, published in 1963, a year before she died. "Think of all the dead there are. There's a million times more dead than living and the dead are dead a million times longer than the living are alive." Thus chastened with regard to the expired, into whose hordes we are all destined to assimilate, it becomes easier to turn to the life that she lived in full.

For O'Connor diehards, *Flannery* will serve as a bounty of revelation and context, from the long, deliberative years of revisions and re-imaginings which eventually begat *Wise Blood* to the events and individuals that inspired some of her most memorable works. For example, the basis for the story "A Stroke of Good Fortune" was an excised subplot from *Wise Blood*, with the pregnant, in denial Ruby originally cast as Hazel Motes's sister. Enoch Emery's psychotic encasement in an ape suit was likely drawn from the marketing hullabaloo O'Connor saw in Times Square around *Mighty Joe Young*. Unrequited love for a traveling Harcourt Brace textbook salesman helped spark the four-day writing flurry that produced the classic story "Good Country People."

Flannery is rife with such delicious bits. But there is also plenty to recommend it to readers outside O'Connor's considerable circle of devotees. With minimal inferential psychobabble, Gooch presents a rousing tale of a quintessentially American artist, whose industry ("Well, I thought I had better get to working on a novel, so I got to work and wrote one," she replied when queried on the origins of *Wise Blood*), fierce individualism, and boldness summoned into being an unlikely triumph.

Today, the Library of America volume of O'Connor's collected works outsells William Faulkner's—though not likely his Oprah's Book Club boxed set! Andalusia, the Milledgeville, Georgia, farm where O'Connor lived, worked, and moseyed around atop her "aluminum legs" (crutches), is a tourist destination. Her work has been published in more than 40 countries. Who would have dared suggest all of this would pass when, at age 26, a year before *Wise Blood* appeared, O'Connor was handed a medical diagnosis that was, in effect, a death sentence?

Endearing peculiarities early proved O'Connor a bird of a different feather—a cliché presumably pardonable when applied to an owner of an extensive menagerie of winged creatures, including beloved peacocks in whose tail feathers she observed "a map of the universe." And also because there are precious few other clichés you could saddle onto a woman who, as a young girl, brought castor oil sandwiches to school to avoid the whole lunch sharing/trading banality. Or who, before age 16, penned biting satires of both Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* entitled *Recollections on My Future Childhood* ("It was my first sardine . . . bruised & blue from the crowding") as well as her own family ("Seven copies were printed and distributed by me. It was in the naturalistic vein and was not well received") and sewed her pet duckling a "whole outfit of underwear and clothes" for a Home Economics final.

Gooch mines innumerable similarly revealing nuggets from O'Connor's stint at the Georgia State College for Women ("Although the majority of you like the 'my love has gone now I shall moan' type of work, we will give you none of it," she writes in her first editor's note for the school's *Corinthian*), life on Andalusia ("I come from a family where the only emotion respectable to show is irritation. In some this tendency produces hives, in others literature, in me both"), the Iowa Writer's Workshop ("She was a lovely girl, but scared the boys to death with her irony," a mentor recalls), and the alcohol, drug, and free love-addled Yaddo artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs ("You survive in this atmosphere by minding your own business and by having plenty of your business to mind, and by not being afraid to be different from the rest of them").

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Different she was. "You have to push as hard as the age that pushes against you," she advised. The shoving virtually guaranteed O'Connor would exist between worlds.

Not that she felt particularly adrift. "I stayed away from the time I was 20 until I was 25 with the notion that the life of my writing depended upon my staying away," she wrote to author Cecil Dawkins. "I would certainly have persisted in that delusion had I not got very ill and had to come home. The best of my writing has been done here."

Indeed, some of O'Connor's most oft-quoted lines—"Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one"; "I have found that anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic"—are drawn from her public defenses of the South.

Yet in her own hometown *Wise Blood* was passed around in brown paper bags and hidden in closets like pornography. Longstanding Milledgeville scuttlebutt holds that her unsuspecting aunt spent a week in bed, horrified after reading the book, drafting apology notes to the priests she'd proudly sent copies. This reaction was not limited to family and neighbors: O'Connor's first college writing instructor, apparently no convert to Hazel Motes's Holy Church of Christ Without Christ, mused to a journalist, "The character who dies in the last chapter could have done the world a great favor by dying in the first chapter instead."

To be sure, writing was not missionary work for O'Connor. "When you can state the theme of a story, when you can separate it from the story itself, then you can be sure the story is not a very good one," she noted. But neither her Roman Catholic faith nor her stringent moral code can truly be untangled from her fiction. To O'Connor there was "nothing harder or less sentimental than Christian realism," and she refused to sugarcoat the ugliness of sin or the arduous, uncertain process of redemption. A 1953 Christmas card to O'Connor from Robert Lowell captured this perfectly: "Both the baptizing and the homicidal lunatic are fearfully good," Lowell wrote.

Hazel Motes almost certainly doth protest too much when he insists, "I'm not a preacher." The cabbie's response, however, is nonetheless instructive:

> "I understand," the driver said. "It ain't anybody perfect on this green earth of God's, preachers nor nobody else. And you can tell people better how terrible sin is if you know from your own personal experience."

O'Connor's most intense work offers a vicarious experience of sin. She saw evil not as "a problem to be solved but a mystery to be endured." The enduring is not a pleasant prospect. In *The Violent Bear It Away*, young Francis Tarwater, told by a madman he would soon become a prophet, stands in a field

> . . . afraid that if he let his eye rest for an instant longer than was needed to place something—a spade, a hoe, the mule's hind quarters before his plow, the red furrow under him—that the thing would suddenly stand before him, strange and terrifying, demanding that he name it and name it justly and be judged for the name he gave it.

KATHERINE EASTLAND

Flannery O'Connor named names, and it is precisely this which makes her work so challenging. A niece of O'Connor's close friend Maryat Lee once asked her aunt why O'Connor "made Mary Grace so ugly" in the story "Revelation."

"Because Flannery loved her," Lee, who the cruel yet socially conscious character was in part modeled after, answered—as Gooch notes, "wisely."

In the epigraph that opens *Flannery*, Gooch quotes O'Connor as certain "there won't be any biographies of me because . . . lives spent between the house and the chicken yard do not make exciting copy."

Ironically, her confinement at Andalusia left biographers with a treasure trove of her gorgeously descriptive and meditative letters to draw on. It is clear from these letters that O'Connor's life is more intriguing (and difficult to encapsulate) than the famously averse-to-fame writer ever supposed. (She once said that she'd rather consign herself to "Hell's fire on this earth" than accept the designation "famous writer.") O'Connor was once asked during a television interview if she might not like to offer a synopsis of her story, "The Life You Save Might Be Your Own."

"No, I certainly would not," she responded. "I don't think you can paraphrase a story like that. I think there's only one way to tell it, and that's the way it's told in the story." ♦

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God Looked East

The disappearance of Christianity in its homeland.

BY PAUL MARSHALL

In the summer of 2002, I traveled in southeastern Turkey to meet with members of the two-millennia-old Syriac church, of whom only a few thousand are left in their homelands. Their language, Syriac-Aramaic, is as close as any living language to the one that Jesus spoke, yet they are forbidden by the Turkish government to teach it to their schoolchildren. We came to deserted villages such as Kafro, whose inhabitants had been driven out by the attacks of Turkish Hezbollah, and which were now sealed off by the military. We visited the monastery of Tur Abdin, a major center of Eastern Christianity, now dwindling under suffocating government restrictions. We met the only two monks remaining in the monastery of the village of Sare.

In Nisibis (now Nusaybin in southeast Turkey), where a famous Christian community dates back to the second century, and which nurtured Ephrem, the greatest of the Syrian theologians, there is a church dating from 439. It was locked and abandoned after World War I when the inhabitants, fleeing massacre, escaped into Syria. For 60 years there had been no Christians there, but now the diocese had sent a Christian family from a local village, who live in a small apartment in the church and try to keep it from falling apart.

We went into the crypt to see the tomb of Jacob of Nisibis, from whom the term "Jacobite" church is named, and while we studied his sarcophagus, our driver, unprompted, began to sing an ancient hymn. His strong voice filled the tomb. We asked him what the words meant, and he told us that the lyrics came from Ephrem himself:

Listen, my chicks have flown,
left their nest, alarmed
By the eagle. Look,
where they hide in dread!
Bring them back in peace!

The Lost History of Christianity
The Thousand-Year Golden Age of the Church in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia—and How It Died
by Philip Jenkins
HarperOne, 336 pp., $26.95

Philip Jenkins's marvelous new book, *The Lost History of Christianity*, tells the largely forgotten story of Nisibis, and thousands of sites like it, which stretch from Morocco to Kenya to India to China, and which were, deep into the second millennium, the heart of the church. While Christians will be particularly concerned with this story, it will be of interest to, and significant for, far more than they.

After an already distinguished career as a historian, Jenkins has, during the last six years, produced a series of books designed to inform modern readers of the religious shape of the world we inhabit, a shape radically different from that of the popular, or even not-so-popular, mind. While much of what he has written will be of little surprise to specialists, he has a gift for clearly and cogently synthesizing and summarizing copious research. *The Next Christendom* (2002) described how Christianity's demographic center of gravity, in the 20th century, moved to the Third World. *The New Faces of Christianity* (2006) argued that, since their culture is closer to the Bible, Africans and Asians understand the book very differently from Europeans and North Americans, and find in it a great liberatory force. *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (2007) found in Europe much more than fading Christianity and growing Islam.

The story usually told of Christianity is that, while it certainly also spread elsewhere, its major influence and home was in Europe. The church developed early, Europe became in some sense Christianized, and subsequently it set the pattern for the faith. With the discovery of America and the European voyages of exploration, as well as colonialism, Christianity then spread to the rest of the world largely as a Western export.

Jenkins demonstrates that this story is flat wrong—or as he more charitably puts it, "much of what we know is inaccurate."

> For most of its history, Christianity was a tricontinental religion, with powerful representation in Europe, Africa and Asia, and this was true into the 14th century. Christianity became predominantly European not because this continent had any obvious affinity for that faith, but by default: Europe was the continent where it was not destroyed.

As late as the 11th century Asia was home to about a third of the world's Christians, Africa another 10 percent, and the faith in these continents had deeper roots in the culture than it did in Europe, where in many places it was newly arrived or still arriving.

About the time of Charlemagne's investiture in 800, the patriarch, or catholicos, of the Church of the East, often called Nestorian, was Timothy, based in Seleucia, in Mesopotamia. In prestige and authority, Timothy was "arguably the most significant Christian spiritual leader of his day," much more influential than the Western pope and on par with the Orthodox patriarch in Constantinople. Perhaps a quarter of the world's Christians looked to him as their spiritual and political head. His duties included appointing bishops in Yemen, Arabia,

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Iran, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Tibet, India, Sri Lanka, and China. A Christian cemetery in Kyrgyzstan contains inscriptions in Syrian and Turkish commemorating "Terim the Chinese, Sazik the Indian, Banus the Uygur, Kiamata of Kashgar, and Tatt the Mongol." The Church of the East may even have reached to Burma, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Korea.

The Asian church was also more intellectually accomplished: Its operating languages were Syriac, Persian, Turkish, Soghdian, and Chinese. Timothy himself translated Aristotle's *Topics* from Syriac into Arabic. Much of the "Arab" scholarship of the time, such as translations of Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, and others into Arabic, or the adoption of the Indian numbering system, was in fact done by Syriac, Persian, and Coptic (Egyptian and Nubian) Christians, often in the high employ of the Caliph.

It was also a church immersed in cultures very different from the Roman and Hellenic environments of the West. Timothy engaged in a famous dialogue with the caliph al-Mahdi, which still survives. The church's milieu was not only Jewish and Muslim but also, perhaps more so, Buddhist, Manichaean, Zoroastrian, and Confucian. This made for relations that defy many of our usual assumptions about history. Jenkins recounts how "in 782, the Indian Buddhist missionary Prajna arrived in the Chinese imperial capital of Chang'an, but was unable to translate the Sanskrit sutras he had brought" into Chinese or other useful local languages.

Hence, Prajna did the obvious thing and consulted with Bishop Adam, head of the Chinese church, who was deeply interested in understanding Buddhism. As a result, "Buddhist and Nestorian scholars worked amiably together for some years to translate seven copious volumes of Buddhist wisdom." These same volumes were taken back home by Japanese monks who had been in Chang'an, and became the founding volumes of Shingon and Tendai, the two great schools of Japanese Buddhism.

'The Annunciation,' 14th-century Byzantine mosaic

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The Chinese also influenced the West. Around 1275, two Chinese monks began a pilgrimage to the Holy land. One, Markos, was probably a Uygur and the other, Bar Sauma, may have been an Onggud. In 1281, Markos was elected patriarch. He protested that he was not up to it, not least because his knowledge of Syriac was rudimentary. But the church fathers argued that the "kings who held the steering poles of the government of the whole world were the [Mongols], and there was no man except [him] who was acquainted with their manners and customs." Markos established his seat near Tabriz, then the capital of the Mongol Ilkhan dynasty.

Bar Sauma had an equally interesting life. In 1287 the Ilkhan overlord sent him on a diplomatic mission to Europe to enlist aid for a proposed joint assault on Mamluk Egypt: Kublai Khan in Beijing would also be a supporter. The Europeans were amazed to discover both that the church stretched to the shores of the Pacific and that the emissary from the fearsome Mongols was a Christian bishop, one from whom the king of England subsequently took communion.

Jenkins places the ending of this world, "the decisive collapse of Christianity in the Middle East, across Asia, and in much of Africa," not with the initial rise of Islam but in the 14th century. One trigger was the Mongol invasions, which threatened Arab Islam as never before. (The Crusades were a minor sideshow.) The Mongols sought alliances with Christians, and there were Christians among them, hence local believers were treated as a potential fifth column and often massacred.

Later, the Mongols themselves embraced Islam and turned on the Christians. Timur's subsequent invasions, among the most brutal in history, furthered the process, as did Seljuk and Ottoman advances and, further east, rising anti-Mongol

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Chinese nationalism. Between 1200 and 1500 the proportion of Christians outside Europe fell from over a third to about 6 percent. By 1500 the European church had become dominant "by dint of being, so to speak, the last men standing" of the Christian world.

The eastern communities were savaged again in a second great wave of persecution beginning in the 19th century, with the slaughter of the Armenians, and also the Syriacs, Nestorians, and Maronites. When the British took over Mesopotamia after the First World War, they judged the Assyrians' situation so desperate that they considered moving them to Canada. In 1930 there were proposals to transfer them to South America. Following massacres by Arabs in 1933, the British flew the patriarch to Cyprus for safety while the League of Nations debated moving them to Brazil or Niger. We may currently be in another such wave as Christians flee the Palestinian areas, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt. In 2003 in Iraq, Christians were some 4 percent of the population, but they have since comprised 40 percent of the refugees.

As Jenkins says, "We have forgotten a world." The "new" globalized Christianity "is better seen as a resumption of an ancient reality." He explores the pervasive influence of Christianity on Islam, and it is always good to see the woolly writings of Karen Armstrong and Elaine Pagels taken apart, albeit gently.

This book has few weaknesses. It would have been good to explore the major cultural effects of the different role of language in Christian and Islamic missions: the former seeking to bring the Word into the locals' languages, the latter seeking to bring the locals the Word in Arabic.

In the late 10th century a Nestorian monk from Arabia visiting China reported his horror at discovering that Christianity had, after centuries, by then become "extinct." But Christianity is now in its fourth phase of expansion in China: More people there go to church than do in Europe. Perhaps Ephrem's hymn and prayer will be answered: "Bring them back in peace." ♦

Soap Opera

How and why Americans got so clean.

BY DAVID AIKMAN

An outbreak, as it were, of recent books on personal and public hygiene in the Anglo-Saxon world reminds us 21st-century folk of some discomfiting truths: Not all that long ago life in towns and cities in England and America, if not "nasty, brutish, and short" in the Hobbesian parlance, was at least noisy, boorish, and smelly. Emily Cockayne's *Hubbub* described how disgusting a walk through London could be as recently as three centuries ago, with hogs rummaging through the streets, tanneries stinking out entire residential neighborhoods, and horse-driven transportation in most urban neighborhoods deafening the residents and imperiling them with frequently out-of-control horses. Now comes an even more intimate tale: Kathleen Brown's *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*.

Foul Bodies
Cleanliness in Early America
by Kathleen M. Brown
Yale, 464 pp., $45

Cockayne's book confined itself to England, whose urban uncouthness surprised and offended most foreigners, at least until the mid-19th century. At this point, the combination of evangelical zeal and public sanitation had cleaned up London significantly, to the point that even foreigners were impressed. Brown's book, by contrast, takes a broad, transatlantic panorama and focuses not so much on such externals of human life as dwellings and neighborhoods, as on the closely personal details of individual hygiene. This deeply researched and richly detailed story asks, and in part answers, the question: How did Anglo-America come to be dominated by a cult of personal hygiene that, even today, surprises many foreigners?

David Aikman is the author, most recently, of The Delusion of Disbelief.

Almost as interestingly, the book analyzes the concept of "civilized" in terms of personal standards of hygiene and dress, and makes some interesting points. Native Americans, it turns out, had much higher standards of bodily cleanliness than the white settlers whose arrival in sailing ships pushed them into the interior of the continent. Brown quotes an early 18th-century Anglo-American observer of Indian culture expressing unqualified admiration of Native American ways of keeping themselves and their infants clean.

Noting how Indian cabins were refreshingly lacking in unpleasant body odors, the observer commented: "These Indians [are] . . . some of the sweetest people in the world."

Similar favorable comments were sometimes made by whites of African slaves who had been transported across the Atlantic. Despite the unspeakable squalor of transportation across the Atlantic in the Middle Passage, some enslaved Africans had come from cultures far cleaner in personal habits than that of the traffickers who had brought them from Africa. Olaudah Equiano, the former slave of West African origin who wrote a powerful testimonial against the slave trade that was first published in 1789, noted that his own Ibo tribe always washed their hands before a meal and considered personal bodily cleanliness a matter, literally, of religion. He dryly commented that the closer he and fellow captives got to the slave embarkation ports in Senegal and to the European overseers of the trade, the dirtier everything became. In

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effect, Europeans who both dislodged and "civilized" the Native Americans and Africans they had enslaved often demonstrated a culture of cleanliness far inferior to that of the peoples they had conquered.

The core of the personal hygiene revolution that eventually triumphed in Anglo-America, Brown believes, was twofold. First was the rediscovery of personal bathing. In medieval Europe, bathing in water had been considered desirable and acceptable. The Crusades had discovered, and brought back to Europe, bath houses that were popular in the Muslim world and in the Byzantine Empire.

With the rise in personal wealth and the popularity of clean linen as a badge of genteel and "civilized" living, however, upper- and middle-class society on both sides of the Atlantic came to believe that clean linen next to the skin was an effective way of wearing away skin dirt and toxins. (Brown notes that the laundering of linen was an exclusively female chore, with the added stigma that the word "laundress" acquired in due course an unsavory reputation; personal services sometimes provided by laundry women went beyond the mere washing of men's clothing.)

Only gradually, towards the end of the 18th century, was bodily immersion in water rediscovered in England and America (actually in England first). This quickly led to the acquisition by many houses of personal bathtubs and the custom that mothers adopted of washing the whole bodies of their children once a week.

The second aspect of the revolution in personal hygiene was the rise in the role of women as upholders of civilization's standards of health and cleanliness. In Brown's story, women's bodies were regarded, by reason of normal female functions, as "disgusting" and even "impure" in early colonial America. But by the early 19th century women were upheld as the keepers of standards of cleanliness, not just for their family, but for society as a whole. The revolution that took place in this social perception was, in part, a recognition that only female labor could maintain cleanliness in clothing, and that women were often the first line of defense against their families' succumbing to infectious, and other, diseases.

Parallel with the emergence of the view that women were family defenders against disease through the imposition of standards of *private* cleanliness for the family was the rise of *public* responses to the vulnerability of American urban life to epidemics of fatal disease. In 1795, Philadelphia was afflicted by an outbreak of yellow fever, a catastrophe that led to swift improvements in public sanitation and keeping the city clean.

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Brown's book is full of tidbits of information that would function well in any new version of Trivial Pursuit. Some examples: At the time of America's War of Independence, fully four-fifths of all Britain's linen exports went to America. Clean linen clothing, Brown notes, was the "trump-card of personal cleanliness for ambitious, cosmopolitan-minded colonials." The ubiquitous phrase "cleanliness is next to godliness" was coined by John Wesley in 1786. As late as 1850, according to one contemporary investigation, 25 percent of New Englanders *never* bathed in the course of an entire year. And so on.

Amid a plethora of minute, if revealing, detail there are some intriguing insights into Anglo-American differences. An English book by Frances Byerley Parkes entitled *Domestic Duties*, published in 1829, advised readers that it was possible to tell a white lie when refusing a social call. By the time the book reached these shores, however, the American editor provided an asterisked comment that telling falsehoods could have a harmful influence on the honesty of servants. Transatlantic cosmopolitanism, it seems, went only so far.

Another English Frances, barely a decade later, the actress Frances Kemble, complained that Americans seemed to like traveling in overheated and unventilated railroad cars, and that the "utter disregard" for the need for fresh air was a source of amazement for all the other foreigners with whom she had conversed on the subject. Kemble noted with disgust the poor hygiene standards of African slaves on her husband's Georgia plantation, where she lived for a year in 1839, but sensibly (by modern standards) attributed the filth to the conditions of slavery rather than to anything inherent in African culture. She also charged southern whites with hypocrisy for treating blacks with disdain; many of them, she said, had fathered illegitimate children with black women, demonstrating double standards in sexual purity.

Brown's book dabbles in the notion of "purity" as an expression of both Christian spiritual holiness of living and supreme personal hygiene. She also refers to the Wesleyan notion that personal hygiene was one of the fruits of godly living as surely as joy and faithfulness. But though she provides additional illustrations of the growing association of personal cleanliness with personal Christian piety from

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the beginning of the 19th century onward, Brown seems to shy away from important cultural and spiritual generalizations at the last jump.

Obviously, as she ably illustrates, Native Americans and Africans often demonstrated higher personal cleanliness than citizens of the "civilized" nations that conquered them: "Thus the civilized body appears both less modern and less Western than we expect," she writes. But she still doesn't quite account for the emergence of a "cleanliness" factor in 19th-century Christian evangelicalism that was absent in 17th-century Puritanism.

This book might also have had a broader cultural resonance if practices of public and private cleanliness in other cultures had been brought in to provide standards of comparison. Why were the Romans so obsessed with bathing and so good at keeping their marching armies free from infection and impure drinking water? Why did the Japanese attain superlative, almost universal, standards of personal hygiene hundreds of years ago when their neighbors on the Asian mainland, not to mention the uncouth northern Europeans who "discovered" them, fell conspicuously short? ♦

Budapestilence

The cost of communism to the human heart.

BY ANDREW PALMER

In this startling novel, the first of Hungarian writer Attila Bartis's three books to appear in English, it's often hard to know exactly what's happening. Effects precede and obliterate their causes, and the weightiest facts are buried beneath the rubble of incident.

The book begins:

> The funeral was at eleven in the morning on Saturday, though I would have liked to have waited a few more days, in case Eszter showed up, but they wouldn't continue with the refrigeration, not even for extra payment. The woman in the office quoted some new regulation and then asked why not cremate the body; it would be cheaper and much more practical since I could pick a time convenient for everybody in the family, to which I replied that I would not incinerate my mother, let the funeral be on Saturday, and I paid in advance for the three days of storage; she gave me a receipt, entered casket number 704-Saturday-Kerepesi-cemetery into the delivery log, and then put some papers before me, showing with a ballpoint pen where to sign.

Tranquility
by Attila Bartis,
translated by Imre Goldstein
Archipelago, 325 pp., $15

And so present right from the start is the sneaky, half-teasing indirection that characterizes the entire novel. The narrator mentions the most crucial events in passing, then returns to them via circuitous routes full of speculative tangents, remembered dreams, stories within stories, and purposely disorienting chronological lurches, often keeping the reader in the dark until that long-delayed spark of recognition, a moment of pleasure mixed with and heightened by relief. No event is as big as the death of the narrator's mother, and the novel takes nearly 300 pages to come home to its opening paragraph.

This is a book that asks for our patience. And met with prose that's both aggressive and nimble—Beckett and Bernhard seem to be touchstones—and a psychodrama that's both overblown and precisely anatomized (as well as very funny), we're happy to grant it.

The story takes place, we eventually gather, in and around Budapest between 1975 or so and 1989, when Soviet troops withdrew from the country after a more than 40-year presence. The "goulash communism" that reigned during this period has sometimes been presented as a more liberal and forgiving—a soupier—kind than others, but Bartis's Hungary is bleak and brutal. Self-amputated cripples claim train stations as their own; half-naked gypsy children run begging alongside cars; a drunk whore pours vodka down the throat of a dead crow, then whacks it against a street curb and screams, "Rebeka is flying! Rebeka is flying! and the sidewalk was all bloody because the bird's head came halfway off the body."

Everything is stained with all manner of corruption, both casual and official. And while lying, cheating, bullying, blackmail, and bribery seep into all aspects of society, the focus here is their effect on art and on family, which for the Wéer family is inextricable: Narrator Andor Wéer is a fiction writer, his twin sister is a violin virtuoso who has escaped to America to pursue her career in greater freedom, and his mother is a well-known professional actress—until, that is, a party official threatens to end her career unless she convinces her daughter to return to Hungary. When her daughter refuses, not only is the official's threat made good but mother disowns daughter, holds a ceremonial funeral service, and withdraws into her house, where she sequesters herself for the last 14 years of her life.

Andor becomes his mother's caretaker (his father has long since disappeared and most likely been murdered) and mines their relationship for material to use in his fiction, which he leaves out for her to read. He authors postcards to his mother in his sister's name and keeps her sealed responses in a locked drawer. He rarely leaves home except for the occasional one-night stand, after which follows the predictable accompanying emptiness.

The first half of the novel darts from untender mother-son encounters (their shouting fits match and often exceed anything from *Portnoy's Complaint*) to

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vignettes from Andor's childhood when he and his sister were close (some of the most delicate and moving passages in the book) to an episode a week or so before his mother's death in which he takes a train to give a reading in the countryside. He is lost—and so are we—in a desolate, Oedipal, sadomasochistic, communistic maze.

The second half offers a way out. First, Andor meets a woman, the Eszter of the first paragraph, a librarian who is in her own way as troubled and desperate as he is. They have sex, and it is transcendent: "Then the walls trembled, the entire socialist realism environment along with the two beer mugs and a full ashtray, was shaken to its foundations, and then Eszter fell forward on the table."

Soon after they meet, Eszter reads Andor's fiction, demands that he try to publish it, becomes his amanuensis, and helps him prepare a collection of short stories. Thus begins a tale of love and first authorship—which for Andor seem interdependent, sometimes to the point of confusion. Once, after Andor has cheated on Eszter with his editor, Eszter screams, "Get the hell out of my life, you writer!" He does not, and it seems only appropriate that the first thing he does when his book is accepted for publication is propose marriage.

But Bartis won't let Andor off the hook that easily. The lovers deceive, betray, and otherwise abuse one another in ways that seem demented and yet somehow sweet, as if violence and neglect were the truest expressions of love. Their relationship jerks back and forth between emotional extremes, and finally crumbles and dissolves.

"Get out of my house," Andor's mother screams at him late in the novel.

"I'd be glad to," Andor answers, "but then you'll starve to death. You can't even turn on the faucet without me, Mother."

To which his mother responds: "My heart . . . my heart is aching!"

And Andor: "Come off it, you've no heart. And neither do I. There is snot in place of our hearts."

This novel is full of terrible acts, and they are perpetrated, as often as not, against friends and family members. Characters are cruel, irrational, fickle, perverse. There is plenty of psychology here—the prose approaches stream-of-consciousness at points—but almost no exploration of motives. Why does everyone act like a child?

Because communism is infantilizing. This seems to be the suggestion behind Andor's Oedipal predicament, which sometimes shades into allegory. (His mother dies, for example, just as the Soviets begin to leave the country.) It's the Soviets who have plucked out all these Hungarian hearts and replaced them with snot!

But Bartis is too subtle a writer to offer communism as the sole force behind all of the awfulness, and even as the Soviets roll their tanks out of the country, Andor overhears a man express a familiar sentiment: "If they're already here, and we got used to their faces, it would have been better if they stayed." ♦

Uprooted Man

A chronicler of housing in search of a home.

BY THOMAS SWICK

A profession will occasionally produce people who can explain its intricacies and profundities to the outside world with such clarity and grace (or suspense and drama) that they become more famous as writers than they were in their original careers.

Medicine is particularly rich in these literary spokesmen: Lewis Thomas, Richard Selzer, Oliver Sacks, Anthony Daniels, Abraham Verghese. Verghese's latest work is fiction, which is where law, perhaps fittingly, likes to look at itself, as evidenced by the novels of Louis Auchincloss, Scott Turow, and John Grisham. Joseph Wambaugh's books illuminate the world of law enforcement, while Ned Rorem's diaries are as well-known as his music. Even undertaking has its bard in Thomas Lynch.

My Two Polish Grandfathers
And Other Essays on the Imaginative Life
by Witold Rybczynski
Scribner's, 240 pp., $25

Thomas Swick, the author of Unquiet Days: At Home in Poland, *is the author, most recently, of* A Way to See the World: From Texas to Transylvania With a Maverick Traveler.

Over the last two decades, with books like *Home: A Short History of an Idea* and *City Life*, Witold Rybczynski has firmly established himself as architecture's voice in the world of letters. Of the above two-timers, he most resembles Thomas, for his writing has the same lucid, rational, humanistic quality. He takes a subject that could be intimidating and makes it accessible. Design and urban planning are for him, as medicine was for Thomas, a means for studying, a window toward understanding, and an attempt at bettering the human condition.

The story Rybczynski tells in this slim memoir begins in upheaval and ends in a quietly triumphant domesticity. He was born in 1943 in Edinburgh, the city his parents landed in after separately fleeing war-torn Poland. The father made a rather daring journey by car from Bucharest to Paris, was posted to a military camp in Brittany, and there was eventually reunited with his wife. They were again separated, when the camp was evacuated, but found each

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other in Saint-Jean-de-Luz on the Spanish border. A fisherman rowed them out to a Dutch collier headed for England.

"It's difficult for me," Rybczynski writes, "to reconcile my childhood image of my parents—circumspect, cautious, to my immature eyes unadventurous—with these audacious individuals."

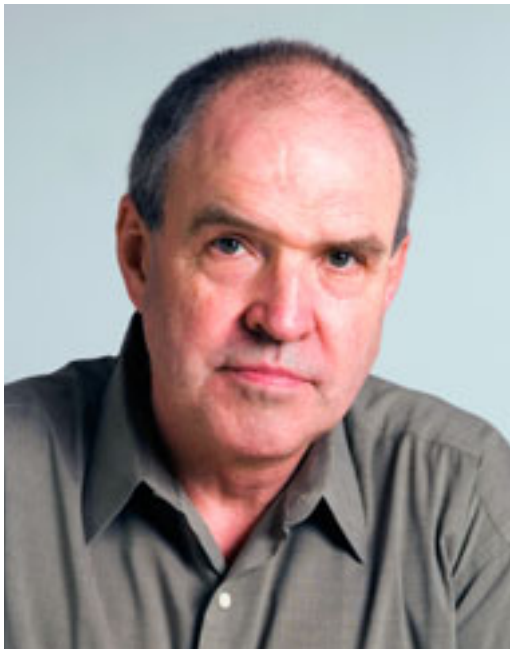
The ensuing chapter on the war, a well-covered subject, is lively because of the personal story: The father was stationed at the base in Italy whose mission was to send support to the Warsaw Uprising. And it is noteworthy (if sobering) because of the Polish perspective. After the war, exiled Poles found themselves in the paradoxical position of having fought on the victorious side and being unable to return to a free homeland.

The Rybczynskis stayed in Scotland for a few years and then moved to Canada, where the father, having gone on ahead, had found an engineering job. Their new town, St. Johns, Quebec, was really two towns: one French-speaking, the other English. The parents did not "impose their Polishness" on their two sons—no Polish lessons or Polish church school—but Polish was spoken at home, Polish customs were observed (three kisses on the cheeks for both the parents), and, naturally, family stories were handed down.

In this way the author learned about his grandfathers. One had been a successful banker in Warsaw; the other, after obtaining a doctorate in mathematics and physics, had settled for the life of a *gimnazium* teacher in a "sleepy country town" in Galicia. They represented opposing types: the solid self-made man and the mysterious man of unfulfilled promise. Rybczynski found himself more attracted to the latter.

"Home is always a refuge from the outside world," he writes, "but never more so than for the child of foreigners." Yet, as he notes, a bilingual province was an ideal place for a bicultural child. (Not really a surprise that he now has his feet in two professions.) He attended Loyola College High School in Montreal, getting an outstanding education from teachers who—intellectually and morally—lived up to the Jesuit ideal.

For all its linguistic richness, his was a fairly typical North American boyhood. There was the model train set in the basement, the author "constructing the scenery out of plaster of Paris applied over fly screening." He started playing drums as a teenager and was soon going to the local tobacconist's for issues of *Down Beat*. On a family trip to New York City in 1959 he made the pilgrimage to Birdland. Jazz was, for his parents, one of numerous New World mysteries. Rybczynski writes thoughtfully of the enormous gulf between his father's adolescence in prewar Poland and his own in postwar Canada, and the dearth of shared, or even comprehended, interests. Yet the two of them sometimes played music together—father on piano, son on drums.



Witold Rybczynski

MICHAEL GRAHAM

"It was," he writes, "our most effective way of communicating."

At McGill, Rybczynski studied architecture, choosing the field not out of any long-held fascination (homemade train scenery notwithstanding) but because it satisfied both his parents' wish that he have a profession, and his own desire to do something creative. It was Bauhaus time:

> We were taught that proper buildings had flat roofs, color was to be used sparingly, and decoration was to be avoided altogether. Materials were to be used "honestly," that is, plainly, without extraneous ornament. . . . Beauty itself was never mentioned.

One summer he accompanied a classmate to Europe. "Architectural travel," he writes, "is a long-standing tradition that derives from the so-called Grand Tour of the 18th and 19th centuries." In France and Switzerland they sought out buildings designed by Le Corbusier—or Corbu, as he and his friends called him—and admired their sculptural qualities. But the real revelation came in Greece. Rybczynski had gone there unenthusiastically, convinced from his studies that classical architecture was "repetitive" and weak on "structure and function."

Yet seeing it in the context of its surroundings, which was rarely possible in photographs, inspired his awe. "I had never before," he writes of the Parthenon, "been so *moved* by a building."

A year later, the recipient of a scholarship, he made a housing tour of North America that included, among other places, Quebec's Lower Town; Reston, Virginia; Harlem Park in Baltimore; and Mill Creek in Philadelphia. At the University of Pennsylvania, his future employer, he came across a new word written on the wall of a studio in the architecture school: KAHNFUSED.

It is always encouraging when the successful speak of failure. Rybczynski's thesis, a hotel on the Gaspé Peninsula, sounds like an early Canadian version of Atlantis—with more architectural integrity, for sure, but just as spectacularly out-of-place. The appreciation that eluded him when he presented the thesis should now be his for unflinchingly writing about it.

After university, and some time spent in architectural offices, Rybczynski went back to Europe, ending

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up by chance on the Balearic island of Formentera. It was a carefree place—with more of a hippie than a Franco vibe—but he made use of his time there by designing his first house. It proved to be a personal breakthrough. After great anguish and self-doubt, he realized that he didn't have to come up with something revolutionary; he could take traditional features—like the high ceilings in big rooms—and work with them in a way that would produce a pleasing, workable variation on the local style.

This project also introduced him to a lifelong passion. Though he would spend two decades on minimum-cost housing, an understanding of the family house would become an architectural and literary pursuit.

The island listlessness eventually got old—"my banker grandfather . . . asserted himself"—and Rybczynski returned home, gradually making his way up the architectural ladder. He worked for a time with Moshe Safdie, designer of Habitat for Expo 67, and joined some international housing projects. And he continued, like all young architects, designing houses for friends and family.

As for his own living quarters, he did more than design. "Sooner or later," he writes, "an architect should build a house for himself." The construction of what was to be a boathouse takes up the last and least satisfying chapter of this book, and not just because it is adapted from a previous one ("The Most Beautiful House in the World"). There is a lot about logistics and workloads—"It took us only a few weeks to complete the framing and to nail on the sheathing that braced the spindly studs and rafters"—that only a fellow builder could love. Intensely focused on his task, Rybczynski skimps on his wife, who appears suddenly and fleetingly (after a couple ex-girlfriends have been properly introduced).

But the chapter does succeed in conveying the tedium of construction, a tedium so great that it killed his desire to build a vessel. Instead, he turned the boathouse into a home, nicely extending the theme of duality in his life. ♦

No Mystery Here

Building the case for Reginald Hill.

BY JON L. BREEN

Reginald Hill's first novel, *A Clubbable Woman*, was published in Great Britain in 1970. Though it introduced one of the great police teams of the past four decades, Fat Andy Dalziel (pronounced Dee-ELL) and his university-educated subordinate Peter Pascoe, it took 14 years to find an American publisher. It isn't hard to see why: It's very British, with the background of a Yorkshire rugby club and plenty of allusions arcane to American audiences.

The Price of Butcher's Meat
by Reginald Hill
Harper, 528 pp., $26.95

Many writers have been deemed not to travel well because they are "too English" (or maybe "too American"), but quality usually prevails in the end. While Hill has never achieved quite the stature in the United States that he has in Britain—the TV version of *Dalziel & Pascoe* has not been prominent here—he has developed a considerable following.

That first novel was essentially a standard whodunit, belonging to one of several popular genres that interested Hill. A restless and ambitious writer, he denies ever having intended to do a series, and indeed over half his output does not concern the Yorkshire cops. His other works include espionage novels, notably *The Spy's Wife* (1980), historical novels under the name Charles Underhill, nonseries crime under the name Patrick Ruell, and several books about black London private eye Joe Sixsmith.

But nearly 40 years after their debut, Dalziel and Pascoe are still on the case. Pascoe has become a more experienced officer, acquired an equally intellectual wife, and risen in the ranks. His boss Dalziel, the more interesting and original character and arguably Hill's greatest creation, has not had his edges gradually smoothed over like some long-lived fictional characters. Indeed, his Yorkshire dialect has become broader, more slangy and colorful, over the years.

Dalziel in *A Clubbable Woman*, discussing the case with Pascoe: "The only thing we make any progress with is the list of things we don't know. Item: who had a strong motive to kill her? No one we know, not even the great Connie as far as we know." In *The Price of Butcher's Meat*, describing the victim-to-be Lady Denham: "She were knocking on, sixties bumping seventy, but well preserved, and built like a buffalo, with an eye to match. If there weren't enough meat on young Clara to make a Christmas starter, there were plenty here for a main course with something left over for Boxing Day."

Hill has been continuously adventurous in his choices, keeping things fresh by varying style, setting, mood, and time period. In *The Last National Serviceman* (1994) he describes the first meeting of his sleuthing team, in which their experience as hostages of a mad former army conscript accounts for a grudging mutual respect. In the novella *One Last Step* (1990), he gives the pair a science fictional case, investigating a murder on the moon in 2010. Though its future extrapolations have proven less than prophetic, it's a neat detective puzzle and a possibly unique experiment. (These first and last cases were included in the 1994 collection *Asking for the Moon*.) The story within a story is a favorite Hill gambit: *Arms*

Jon L. Breen is the author, most recently, of Eye of God.

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and the Women (1999) includes segments from the ancient Greek historical novel Pascoe's wife Ellie is working on, while *Dialogues of the Dead* (2002) includes some pernicious submissions to a newspaper short-story contest.

The task Hill sets himself in his latest novel is more ambitious than ever: to transfer Jane Austen's unfinished final novel from the early 19th century to the present while keeping the same general situation and even the same character names. It's a tribute to Austen's modernity and universality: If *Pride and Prejudice* could be turned into a Bollywood musical set in contemporary India, why not make *Sanditon* a 21st-century detective novel?

Austen provided a perfect mystery setup: an inheritance. In the Austen fragment's first chapter, Mr. and Mrs. Parker are traveling in Sussex looking for the home of a surgeon living in Willingden, when a road accident near the home of Mr. Heywood injures Parker. While his sprained ankle is being tended to, Parker learns that he has the wrong Willingden but takes the opportunity to sing the praises of his home village, Sanditon: "The finest, purest Sea Breeze on the Coast—acknowledged to be so—Excellent Bathing—fine hard Sand—Deep Water ten yards from the Shore—no Mud—no Weeds—no slimey rocks. Never was there a place more palpably designed by Nature for the resort of the Invalid."

The Parkers remain as houseguests for a fortnight, at the end of which they invite the elder daughter of the house, Charlotte Heywood, to accompany them back to Sanditon.

In Hill's version, the events are largely the same, but the action moves to Yorkshire for the convenience of his continuing characters; modes of transportation, among other details, are updated; the sought-after healer is an alternative therapist rather than a surgeon; and the name of the seaside resort becomes Sandytown. Parker's sales pitch, no less fulsome, is adjusted to fit contemporary times:

> We live in a sick world—a world suffering from some deep-rooted wasting disease—of which terrorism and [global] warming are but symptoms. To cure the whole we must start with smallest part, the individual! . . . Pure ozone-enriched air to cleanse the lungs—surging salty water to refresh the skin & stimulate the circulation—peace & quiet to restore the troubled spirit—

Hill's version begins with email messages from 22-year-old Charlotte (known as Charley) to her sister Cassie, a medical missionary in Africa. The missives are more detailed, intelligent, literate, and stylish than most such—how often do you come across the word "juvenated" in family correspondence?—but they have their quirks, shunning apostrophes and quotation marks and misapplying "ie" and "ei" in some words. Could these idiosyncrasies be clues to something or other, the reader may wonder? With the games-playing Hill, it's always possible.

While Hill has never achieved quite the stature in the United States that he has in Britain, he has developed a considerable following and has been continually adventurous in his choices, keeping things fresh by varying style, setting, mood, and time period.

Andy Dalziel is introduced as a patient in a Sandytown convalescent home, the Avalon Clinic, where he is recuperating from serious injuries suffered in his previous case, published in Britain as *The Death of Dalziel* and more accurately retitled for the American market, *Death Comes for the Fat Man*. (It came, but he rejected it.) As part of his therapy, Dalziel has reluctantly agreed to speak his thoughts into a digital recorder. For the remainder of the book, the narrative is divided among Charlotte's emails, Andy's oral diary, and Hill's customary elegant third person. Other characters from Austen are introduced, notably Lady Denham ("Every Neighbourhood should have a great Lady"), whose bizarre murder (she takes the place of a pig in a roasting basket revolving over a charcoal pit) provides a case for the Mid-Yorkshire CID, with Pascoe in charge but his invalid boss putting an oar in whenever possible.

Not all of the non police characters are drawn from Jane Austen: Back from the dead in a wheelchair is the charming rogue Franny Roote, whose long and complicated history with Pascoe began in the second book in the series, *An Advancement of Learning* (1971).

The nature of the crime justifies the title, taken from Austen's fragment. It occurs in a discussion of the possibility of local merchants raising their prices should Sanditon become a popular resort. Oddly, this is the second Hill novel in a row to have its British title changed. In the U.K. it is known as *A Cure for All Diseases*, also from Austen and certainly an apt title for a murder mystery.

For all its ingenuity and readability, *The Price of Butcher's Meat* can't be counted among Hill's best strictly as a detective story, mainly because of an overcomplicated windup. But it is another exhibit in the case for Hill as one of the great crime writers, certainly among those currently active—and maybe all-time. He satisfies the demand of the current market for ever-increasing page counts, but achieves it with more matter, rather than the unconscionable padding of lesser writers, and he observes the more rigorous demands of real puzzle-spinning.

What better attributes for 21st-century crime fiction than contemporary sensibility, creation of deeply etched characters, keen ear for language, fine literary style, and respect for those often-scorned Golden Age conventions that make detective fiction a unique genre? ♦

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Works in Theory

Flash! Economics is an art, not a science.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

The authors' claim is nothing if not immodest: "We accomplish what existing economic theory has not. We produce a theory that explains fully and naturally how the U.S. economy, and indeed the world economy, has fallen into the current crisis." This is to be accomplished by proving—no, arguing—that man does not live by bread alone, or do calculus before making every decision.

Fair warning: The reader will be lucky to avoid being singed from the flames of burning straw men. Consider the attack on "those [unnamed] who think that the economy should just be a free-for-all," populated by consumers and investors whose irrationality might create massive macroeconomic swings. Or on "economists [also unnamed] and business writers . . . [who] assume that variations in individual feelings, impressions, and passions do not matter." Or on those (again, unnamed) who believe that "free market capitalism will be essentially perfect and stable." Irrationality among private-sector actors, of course, requires an increasingly active set of rational government regulators and other public-sector players to contain the boom-and-bust cycles produced by these private passions.

Liberals who are so keen on warning labels will agree that this book should come with a large-print warning: Beware the bias against private-sector actors who might get in the way of the increased government that accounting for irrational human behavior necessarily requires.

Animal Spirits
How Human Psychology Drives the Economy and Why It Matters for Global Capitalism
by George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller
Princeton, 264 pp., $24.95

Three examples should suffice:

First, in discussing the savings and loan scandals, the authors argue that failed S&Ls were "worth a great deal for whatever sweetheart deals their owners could make." The evils of the S&L deals were that they presented the opportunity of "kickbacks from developers, or they could involve the purchase of risky but high-paying assets." Kickbacks are illegal if concealed; purchasing risky assets in the hope of profit is one of the perfectly legal acts that make markets work.

This grouping of the illegal with legal risk-taking morphs into an attack on Michael Milken who, in fact, did more to shake up the "fat cats" that are now so hated than all of the government regulators and shareholder activists combined—a fact that eludes the authors.

Second, it seems that "the bounty of capitalism has at least one downside. It does not produce what people *really* need; it produces what they *think* they need, and are willing to pay for." (The emphasis on "really" is mine.) Shades of John Kenneth Galbraith and others who worried about the manipulative powers of the madmen on Madison Avenue. How the authors are able to decide what people "really" need is not made clear, but it should worry policy makers that these two gentlemen, given the opportunity to decide, will decide what people only "think" they need, and confine their purchases to only those things they "really" need.

Advocates of more government often persuade themselves that they are capable of such decisions, and that advertisers are so skilled that they can persuade consumers to buy lots of stuff, repeatedly, that they only think they need. Dangerous, that.

Third, the authors are appalled at the level of executive compensation. But instead of attacking the flawed process by which compensation has been set—a process only partially corrected by Sarbanes-Oxley's requirement that directors be independent of the CEOs whose compensation they are setting—they proceed to attack the Milken-led takeover wave that wiped out a great deal of the cause of the problem: the separation of ownership from control, and the cozy relationship of executives and their boards.

The authors complain that when firms were taken private, using junk bonds (less pejoratively known as high-yielding debt instruments), executives profited massively. Note the sly construction of this sentence: "If the firms that had been taken private could pay off the junk bonds, these executives would be rewarded enormously." It is not "the firms" that paid off the bonds, it is the executives who were "rewarded enormously" that did so. The process was one in which the separation of ownership and control—complained about over 75 years ago by Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means in their classic, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, for producing a principal-agent problem—was corrected, and the incentives of owners and managers aligned properly.

By eliminating corporate jets, corporate wine cellars that in one case numbered 20,000 bottles, and pay that bore no relation to performance, what the authors describe as "Milken's exploits" did a great deal to increase the efficiency of the firms that fell into their hands—and to break the monopoly of the interlocked financial establishment on credit. To argue, as the authors do, that "it *could be* that the timing of Milken's exploits and the beginning of the new inequality were merely coincidental" (emphasis added) and that this

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new inequality "does highlight the fragility of capitalism" is to leap from the erroneous to the absurd.

But these are quibbles compared with my main problem with this book: Its misrepresentation of Keynes's view of the role of "animal spirits" and its failure to concede that economists have long recognized that man is not a two-legged computer.

Start with John Maynard Keynes. As the authors note, he pointed out in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* that "our decisions to do something positive . . . can only be taken as a result of animal spirits—of a spontaneous urge to action rather than inaction, and not as the outcome of a weighted average of quantitative benefits multiplied by quantitative probabilities." But the great man is careful to point out that animal spirits are not the whole of the story: "Reasonable calculation is supplemented and supported by animal spirits . . . [and] we should not conclude from this that everything depends on waves of irrational hysteria."

In short, "whim or sentiment or chance" plays a role in the affairs of men, but calculation and reason also matter. More important, the conclusion the authors draw from their emphasis on irrational behavior is this: "Without intervention by the government the economy will suffer massive swings in employment."

Well, yes. But there is intervention and there is intervention. There is intervention in the form of monetary policy, the effectiveness of which Keynes had serious doubts about, and fiscal policy, as to the effectiveness of which many conservatives remain unpersuaded. There is intervention in the form of regulations that force transparency and encourage information symmetry, and that align the interests of society and individual actors (requiring skin in the game for mortgage lenders is one such) and locks up fraudsters.

Then there is intervention of the sort that Keynes warned against, a warning that the current administration might usefully consider. "Economic prosperity," he wrote, "is excessively dependent on a political and social atmosphere which is congenial to the average businessman." Surely that "atmosphere" is poisoned by populist attacks, and by some of the features of the policies now being proposed, including pervasive regulation of financial institutions by risk-averse government employees.

In sum, I wonder what this beautifully written book has to tell us. Economists have always known that real people don't behave like the completely rational folks of their theories, and good economists do their best to adjust their conclusions to incorporate that fact. We have also known that fairness, which the authors accuse economists of neglecting, often trumps efficiency. It is the job of economists to tell politicians the cost of their various quests for fairness, and for politicians to decide if the cost is worth bearing.

And we have long known that the government has to set the rules of engagement for combatants in the marketplace, and that those rules need revision to catch up with the innovations in financial markets. Of course, in this current crisis we have seen the government become a player in the game, as well as its referee—and we don't yet have a strategy to restore control of the allocation of capital to a properly regulated private sector.

The authors would have been well advised to tone down their claim for novelty and importance: "We accomplish what existing economic theory has not." Not so. Better, perhaps, to have made the more modest suggestion that those model-builders who brought so many financial institutions to ruin in recent years might have done less damage if they had given a bit of thought to some of the points made by the authors: They are right that there are more things going on in markets than are dreamt of by model builders.

Not news to most economists. ♦

'Truth and Metre'

A poet in touch with his critical faculties.

BY EDWARD SHORT

In 1891, Henry James reaffirmed his respect for criticism by stressing what he might have called its exiguity:

> The critical sense is so far from frequent that it is absolutely rare, and the possession of the cluster of qualities that minister to it is one of the highest distinctions. It is a gift inestimably precious and beautiful; therefore, so far from thinking that it passes overmuch from hand to hand, one knows that one has only to stand by the counter an hour to see that business is done with baser coin. We have too many schoolmasters; yet not only do I not question in literature the high utility of criticism, but I should be tempted to say that the part it plays may be the supremely beneficent one when it proceeds from deep sources, from the efficient combination of experience and perception. In this light one sees the critic as the real helper of the artist, a torch-bearing outrider, the interpreter, the brother.

Collected Critical Writings
by Geoffrey Hill
edited by Kenneth Haynes
Oxford, 832 pp., $49.95

Into this exclusive club James would certainly have admitted the French critics who influenced him—Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Gautier, Daudet—but I suspect that he had English and American critics in mind when he spoke of his age having "too many schoolmasters." We are plagued with the same surplus, though our schoolmasters

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are infinitely duller. Nevertheless, we do have some proper critics still working: Ian Ker has written brilliantly about the writers of the Catholic Revival, and Michael Alexander recently wrote an excellent book on medievalism and the history of modern England. Another good critic who has been at work for over a quarter-century is the British poet Geoffrey Hill, whose learned criticism, like his poetry, revives something of the high seriousness of Modernism.

In this splendid collection of his critical writings, which brings together three previous books—*The Lords of Limit* (1984), *The Enemy's Country* (1991), and *Style and Faith* (2003)—as well as 13 uncollected pieces, Hill illustrates what James had in mind when he said that the good critic is "the helper of the artist." There are essays here on an extraordinary range of poets—from Shakespeare, Robert Southwell, Henry Vaughan, John Dryden, and Jonathan Swift to Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ralph Waldo Emerson, A.E. Housman, John Crowe Ransom, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Ivor Gurney, and Isaac Rosenberg. And each essay, in its way, examines what Hill refers to (in one of his recent poems) as "the pitiless wrench between truth and metre."

The help Hill supplies is a constant summons to intelligence, which echoes James's advice to the young woman who asked him what she needed to do to become a proper novelist: "Be someone on whom nothing is lost." Very little is lost on Hill. In his introduction to *The Enemy's Country*, he declares: "I follow MacDiarmid in desiring 'A learned poetry wholly free / From the brutal love of ignorance' and hold with John Berryman, that 'all artists who have ever survived were intellectuals—sometimes intellectuals *also*, but intellectuals.'" Whenever Hill is critical of a poet, it is because he somehow fails his intelligence test, though on the whole he is a generous grader.

The poet with whose later work Hill takes barbed exception is Eliot. After citing "the routine demands made, between 1940 and 1945, upon an author of Eliot's high reputation, for work of an appropriate public significance," he delivers the *coup de grâce*:

> In the "Music of Poetry," though he says that the poet must, like the sculptor, be faithful to the material in which he works, Eliot's material is no longer primarily language but Christian Thought; or the People as he understands them. And how he understands people is still very much how he understood them in the pub scene of *The Waste Land*, only now, instead of saying, "Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said," they say, "that is how I should talk if I could talk poetry." This is not enhancement but impoverishment, and the language of *Four Quartets* also is language that has suffered impoverishment. Making it part of the Anglican Lectionary is not going to amend that radical absence.

Geoffrey Hill

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Some readers might balk at this: surely a case can be made for *Four Quartets*, Eliot's long goodbye not only to his varied influences but to art itself. His revels had ended, and if the language in which he announced his farewell was tired, it was understandably so. Still, whatever claims can be made for the later poetry, it is difficult to deny that a good deal of Eliot's later criticism was marred by orotund superficiality, by what Hill calls "the ruminative, well-modulated voice of a man of letters." What gave Eliot's earlier criticism its zest was the satisfaction it drew from besieging the Georgian citadel. Once he became a citadel in his own right, he could only turn his guns on himself, which, in a late essay, he did to devastating effect:

> Most men either cling to the experience of youth, so that their writing becomes an insincere mimicry of their earlier work, or they leave their passion behind, and write only from the head, with a hollow and wasted virtuosity. There is another and even worse temptation: that of becoming dignified, of becoming public figures with only a public existence—coat-racks hung with decorations and distinctions, doing, saying, and even thinking and feeling only what they believe the public expects of them.

Here, it might be said, Eliot was better at bashing Eliot than any of his critics.

Besides slack thinking, Hill castigates uncharitable feeling. Citing a passage from "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" by Matthew Arnold, he makes a point for which anyone saddled with an unfortunate surname will be grateful. Arnold had quoted a newspaper report in which a workhouse child named Wragg had been found murdered, which ended, "Wragg is in custody." The phrase offended Arnold "and rightly," says Hill, "because it speaks with the voice of the beadle, the complacent harshness of the penal code lopping off "the superfluous Christian name," a process endorsed by the jubilant tribunes of the vox populi. However, the name Wragg itself strikes Arnold's sensitive ear as horribly vulgar; the critic who has warned against catchwords is caught by a word and, in an unguarded moment, righteous anger and unrighteous taste become compounded. The indignation of a just and compassionate man is degraded into a whinny of petty revulsion.

Hill is particularly good on Swift: "It is not altogether astonishing to find in Swift's poetic satire," he writes, "a certain amount of irritation at the spurious proscriptions of false delicacy. . . . [Yet] with many aspects of the consensus of taste

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Swift was undoubtedly able to agree, and it would be patronizing to suppose that he necessarily regarded himself as sacrificing original liberty on the altar of caste. . . . Swift's poetry gained more than it lost by his overall adherence to the major canons of his class."

This dispels the still-common view of Swift as a misanthropic exile repulsed by Yahoos. Elsewhere in the same superb essay, Hill remarks of the satirical Dean's raillery, which was not universally appreciated, especially by those who bore its brunt:

> The casualty rate could, admittedly, have been higher; but the point would seem to be that, notwithstanding the precise distinction between fine raillery and coarse insult, mistakes were frequently made, even by . . . skilled practitioners. It may seem that infringements occurred through the necessity to turn in small tight circles of mutual exacerbation.

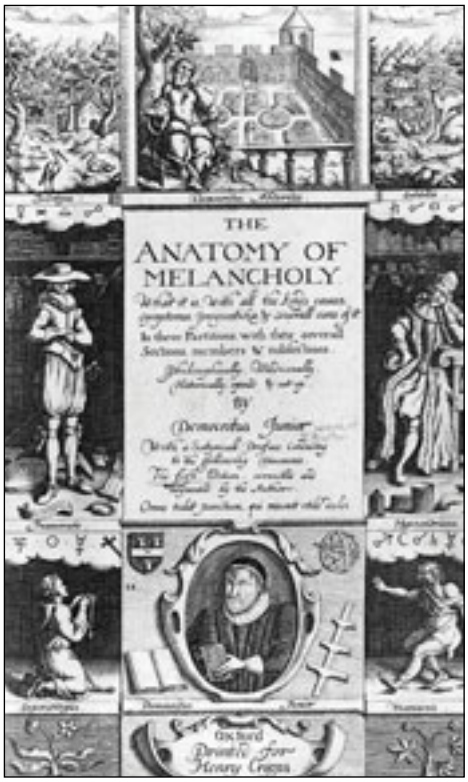
For so dazzlingly allusive a writer as Hill, it was perhaps inevitable that he should write about the most allusive of all writers, Robert Burton, whose *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) was the only book to get Samuel Johnson out of bed before noon. As in his essay on the poet Henry Vaughan, whom he commends for what he calls his "serene celebrations of indwelling . . . something within and withdrawn when all has been quantified and qualified," Hill finds much in Burton that sheds light on his own poetry, remarking in one passage how Burton "understands that sphere of action, which the Gospels and Epistles call 'this world,' to be '*Mundus foriosus*,' the domain of stupefying monotony and purposeless energy."

This is similar to much in Hill country—for example, this from *The Triumph of Love* (1998), his long jeremiad against history and its fallen architects:

> *Admittedly at times this moral landscape*
> *to my exasperated ear emits*
> *archaic burrings like a small, high-fenced*
> *electricity sub-station of uncertain age*
> *in a field corner where the flies*
> *gather and old horses shake their sides.*

Hill also reveals something of his own poetic *modus operandi* when he says, "With Burton . . . the active declares itself in plain, even severe statements of faith . . . that stand out from the tragic-comic welter like inspirations of 'God's grammar.'" He quotes this from Burton: "We must live by faith not by feeling, 'tis the beginning of grace to wish for grace: we must expect and tarry."

Even when writing about other artists, Hill most illuminates the artist in himself. Perhaps one of the reasons why he has always cultivated a certain reticence in his poetry is that he is chary of the "plain, even severe statements of faith" to which he is otherwise drawn. As he says in one of his poems, "Things unspoken as spoken give us away."



The tidy will find Hill wayward: Tangents and divagations pull him hither and yon, especially in a wonderful piece on rhythm entitled "Redeeming the Time." He can never resist bypaths that promise sidelights on his subjects, and in this he resembles the greatest of all digressers, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who once remarked, "Of Parentheses I may be too fond—and will be on my guard in this respect—But I am certain that no work of empassioned and eloquent reasoning ever did or could subsist without them—They are the drama of Reason—& present the thought growing, instead of a mere Hortus siccus."

Hopkins is perhaps the most congenial of the poets Hill takes up, sharing as he does his fascination with rhythm, his close attention to words, and his impatience with the presumed lazy-mindedness of the common reader. In "A Postscript on Modernist Poetics," Hill quotes approvingly Hopkins's contention that "Plainly if it is possible to express a subtle and recondite thought on a subtle and recondite subject in a subtle and recondite way with great felicity and perfection . . . something must be sacrificed . . . and this may be the being at once, nay perhaps even being without explanation at all, intelligible."

But is this persuasive? Shakespeare and Dante never had any difficulty treating the subtle and recondite intelligibly. Hopkins, conscious that he was vulnerable on this score, was trying to let himself off the hook. Hill can rehearse this feeble pleading to try to excuse his own impenetrability, but it won't wash. Hopkins and Hill are good poets *despite* their unintelligibility, not because of it. Nevertheless, when the demands they make on their readers pay off, the results can be exhilarating. Hill shows how Hopkins's stubborn eccentricity carries the day in "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire":

> Suddenly there bursts in an uncouth anacoluthon: "Enough! The Resurrection!" It is a great moment, one of the greatest grammatical moments in nineteenth-century English poetry. It has been criticized for arbitrariness, but arbitrariness is the making of it. The Resurrection is a kind of eschatological anacoluthon; no amount of standard grammar can anticipate or regularize that moment.

This is the sort of close, useful criticism of which Henry James would have approved. A good deal of disreputable acclaim has been lavished on Hill—he is touted by the likes of Harold Bloom and A.N. Wilson—but readers should not be put off by his admirers. For all his obscurity, Hill is worth reading, and the brilliance of this collection demonstrates why. ♦

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We Recommend . . .

Four new books from contributors to Books & Arts.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Joe Queenan is an essayist whose jaundiced eye, sharp tongue, and sharper humor have dissected the great American insect, to great effect, in these pages. But in ***Closing Time: A Memoir*** **(Viking, 352 pp., $26.95)** the microscope is turned inward in a genuinely remarkable—certainly startling and eloquent—autobiography of childhood and youth in the Philadelphia of the 1960s and '70s.

To be sure, it is only incidentally set in Philadelphia, for Queenan's landscape is not so much the exterior world but the inner landscape of a sad, horrific, even terrifying, working-class Irish-American family that conforms to rude stereotype—drunken, pugnacious, violent father; melancholic, detached, ineffectual mother—but never fails to fascinate, even hypnotize, the reader. It is impossible to exaggerate the travails of the Queenan household—an uncertain, hand-to-mouth existence, featuring hunger and routine privation, as well as beatings and psychological torment—or the horrors of everyday life for an intelligent, perceptive son of the household.

The author's detachment in *Closing Time* is not just powerful, but impressive by any standard: Queenan recounts these Dickensian set-pieces with an eye for the telling detail, and yet with the characteristic humor, even the comic sensibility, that is his trademark. This is a Baby Boom memoir that could not be further removed from the world of Davy Crockett, Woodstock, or summers on Cape Cod.

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Winston Groom is best known as a novelist (*Forrest Gump*), but in ***Vicksburg, 1863*** **(Knopf, 496 pp., $30)** he assumes the mantle of another southern craftsman with uncommon narrative powers, the late Shelby Foote, whose three-volume history of the Civil War might be seen as the model for this masterful account of the siege of Vicksburg.

Groom makes the point that the Union campaign to command the Mississippi River Valley was arguably of greater importance in the longer term than the Battle of Gettysburg, raging as Vicksburg fell. Gettysburg halted General Robert E. Lee's advance in taking the war to the north—and of course, inspired Abraham Lincoln's memorial address, which put the war's rationale into 10 unforgettable sentences—but the fall of Vicksburg closed off an important supply route and effectively divided the Confederacy in half. The verdict on Gettysburg is mixed, neither a wholesale Union victory nor a Confederate defeat. But the results of Vicksburg were unambiguous: It sealed the fate of the Confederacy, and drew the Civil War to a slow, but foregone, conclusion.

Above all, it signaled the rise of General Ulysses S. Grant, the fighting commander of Lincoln's dreams, whose strategic vision and grim determination dug the roadbed to the end of the war. Groom's command of the military facts, and his extraordinary mixture of vignettes big and small, brings this distant, chaotic, and shockingly violent episode to life, and leaves the reader to ask, what's next?

To the extent that modern conservatism may be defined as a temperament, as well as a body of ideas, we owe something to P. J. O'Rourke, whose lifetime hit parade (*Republican Party Reptile*, *Give War a Chance*, *Parliament of Whores*, etc.) is soon to be joined by a personal anthology on the automobile—***Driving Like Crazy: Thirty Years of Vehicular Hellbending, Celebrating America the Way It's Supposed To Be—With an Oil Well in Every Backyard, a Cadillac Escalade in Every Carport, and the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Mowing Our Lawn*** **(Atlantic Monthly, 288 pp., $24)**—the subtitle of which is refreshingly comprehensive and self-explanatory.

The tone and tenor of this volume may not appeal to Obama-era consumers in the market for a hybrid; but then again, P. J. O'Rourke being his inimitable self, they are likely to find it irresistible. "I've reworked many of the pieces," he says, "because the writing—how to put this gently to myself?—sucked. I may not have become a better writer over the years but I've become a less bumptious and annoying one, I think." Less bumptious and annoying, to be sure; but like the auto mechanic of mythology, funny and wise at the same time.

Diane Scharper, who teaches writing at Towson University in Baltimore and reviews fiction for THE WEEKLY STANDARD, has edited (with Philip Scharper Jr., M.D.) an intriguing collection of autobiographical pieces entitled ***Reading Lips and Other Ways to Overcome a Disability*** **(Apprentice, 208 pp., $22.95)**. The memoirs take various forms—a few, indeed, are in verse—and the definition of "disability" includes disease and injury. But the message is the various ways in which humans adapt to physical misfortune or imperfection—or "handicaps," as it used to be said—and yet find the means to put one foot in front of the other, and live. These memoirs are intended not to inspire, although inspiration is an obvious by-product, but to illustrate the uses of adversity, and the different ways different people tame the beasts of disability, pain, and impairment. Or, in certain memorable instances, turn catastrophe into an unanticipated chance. ♦

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